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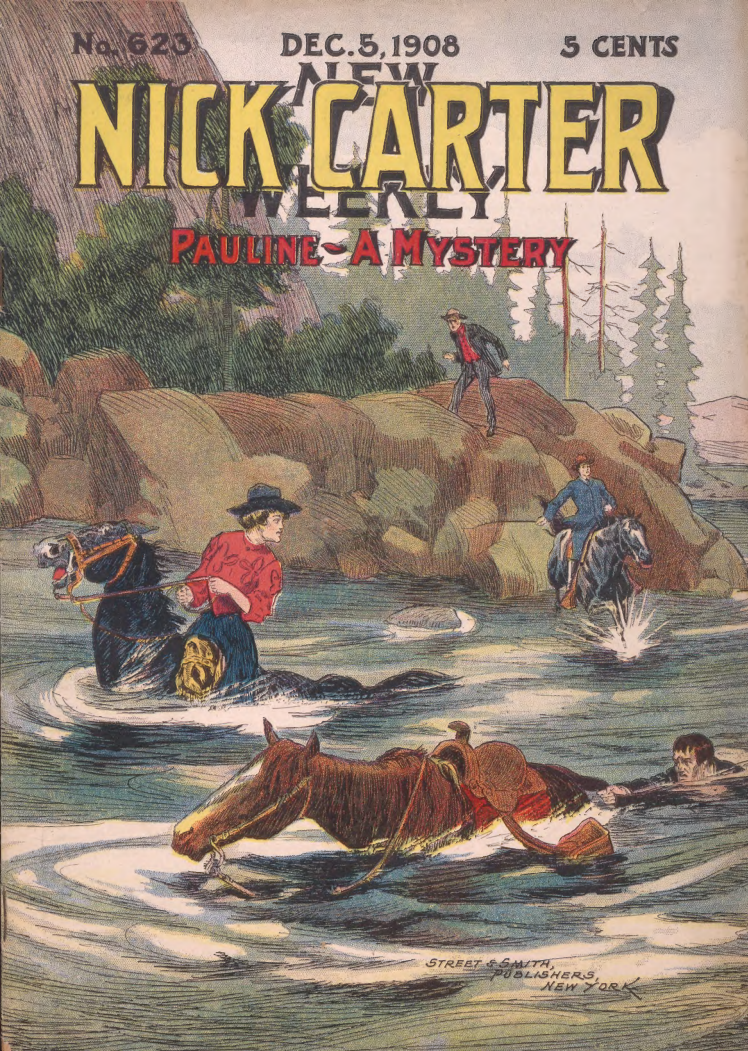
NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

PAULINE—A MYSTERY



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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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Pauline: A Mystery;

OR,

NICK CARTER'S SWIMMING CHASE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A WOMAN'S FEARS.

"Hello, Jimmy Congdon!" exclaimed Nick Carter, starting to his feet and grasping the hand that was extended to him. "This is a most unexpected pleasure, as well as a great surprise. I suppose, of course, that you are sailing by this vessel?"

"Sure, Mr. Carter," was the genial response, as the young lawyer from Kansas City seized upon the extended hand and wrung it heartily. "My wife and I are taking the trip just for a flyer. You know, she hasn't been at all well since the death of her father. On the level, Nick, I can't get it out of my head that she is a bit daffy about that, you know."

"How so?" asked the detective, resuming his steamer chair.

"Well, she can't, or won't, get it out of her imagination that Pauline is in some manner responsible for the death of her father. Of course, it is preposterous, but Irma sticks to the idea, just the same, and there is no arguing her out of it. That is the principal reason why I decided upon this trip abroad. I thought that change of scene would do her good and probably bring her out of the morbid idea."

"I see. Irma is not one whom I would suppose to be prone to morbidity, Jimmy."

"Not in the least. She never was before, you know. She was always as gay and full of life and spirits as any one you ever saw. She was so, in fact, until that abduction business, just before our marriage. But she has never been the same since."

"That was a great shock to her, Jimmy."

"You're right it was."

"You see, it was doubtless more of a shock than either of us supposed. Pauline, while not actually Irma's sister, had always stood in that relation. It was the same to Irma as if they were actually sisters, you know. And to find that Pauline was what she was—well, I don't know as one can blame the girl."*

"No. That's right."

"Then the sudden taking off of her father was another shock. Still, it seems strange that she should charge Pauline with responsibility for it, unless there is good cause."

The foregoing conversation took place on the deck of a steamship which was to steam away within another hour for an European port. Nick Carter had

*See No. 616 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

taken passage upon the steamer for the sake of the rest the voyage would afford him, and it was his intention to return to New York by the same boat. He had found a shady spot in which to place his steamer chair, and was reclining upon it at his ease, when James Congdon, a young lawyer from Kansas City, appeared and greeted him.

It was just a year since the detective and his second assistant Patsy had closed up a case which involved many coincidences in which James Congdon was concerned, and the two had not met since the stirring events of that time. Congdon had ultimately married Irma Ransom, and six months after the date of her marriage, her father, John Y. Ransom, a rich man, had died very suddenly at his home in Dallas, Texas.*

The detective had, of course, been notified of both these events, but beyond forwarding congratulations in the one case and condolences in the other, had not renewed the acquaintance established.

It was, therefore, with considerable surprise that he discovered that Jimmy Congdon and his wife were to be passengers aboard the steamship upon which he had decided to take his short vacation.

The woman referred to as Pauline, who was two years older than Congdon's wife, had been brought up by John Y. Ransom as his own daughter, and, therefore, as Irma Ransom's sister, and neither of the girls had ever known otherwise until they were women grown; but at that time the machinations of a lawyer named Basil King, who was an ex-outlaw of the Southwest, had destroyed the peaceful relations hitherto existing in the family, and had resulted in the abduction of Irma and her father by the lawyer, assisted and abetted by Pauline.

Nick Carter had taken the case in hand, with the result that King was ultimately arrested for what he had done, and was charged, also, with the murder of Pauline's own father, one Henry Hastings, ten years prior to that time.

For this King had been tried and convicted, and sentenced to life imprisonment, which sentence he was now serving in the State of Texas.

It had been part of King's plot to make Pauline Hastings believe that her own father had been murdered by her foster father, John Y. Ransom; and no one had ever been able to convince her of her error in this decision.

After the dénouement following upon the arrest of Basil King and the revelation of Pauline's complicity in the circumstance prior to it, Irma's father had provided liberally for Pauline, but had debarred her from further associations with his daughter, whose marriage to Congdon had followed a few months afterward.

Such was the condition of affairs as Nick Carter understood them at the time of the meeting on the deck of the steamer with which this chapter was begun.

There was a vacant chair near to Nick's, and Congdon drew it forward and seated himself upon it, after which he glanced at his watch, snapped it shut, returned it to his pocket, and remarked:

"There is still more than an hour before sailing-time."

"Yes," replied the detective. "Where is your wife, Jimmy?"

"She is below in her stateroom, putting things to rights for the voyage."

"I am sorry to hear that she is not in good health."

"Oh, her health seems to be all right, save for this morbid idea she has about Pauline."

"Tell me more about it, Jimmy."

"I don't think that there is anything definite to tell about it, Nick, as you said a moment ago. Irma was greatly shocked by the revelation which followed upon the arrest of King. She had until that moment believed Pauline to be her own sister, and the discovery that she was not so was of itself a considerable shock. To find, in addition to that, the fact that Pauline had plotted with King, and that the ultimate outcome of their plottings meditated further crimes, was rather too much for Irma. She believed then and she believes now that Pauline's mind is affected."

"I have always rather had that idea myself," said the detective.

The young lawyer shrugged his shoulders and stared for a moment at the lighted end of his cigar, then he replied:

"If that is true, Nick, the case is most decidedly one of monomania. If Pauline is crazy in that particular, she is just as decidedly sane in every other respect."

"That is not surprising," said Nick.

"There is another thing," remarked Congdon, after a considerable pause, during which they were both thinking deeply.

"What is that?"

"I told you a moment ago that Irma is convinced of Pauline's responsibility for John Y. Ransom's death; now, in addition to that, she is positive in her own mind that her own life is threatened by Pauline."

*See NICK CARTER WEEKLY, No. 616.

"Do you think she has any reason for that, Jimmy, based upon anything more substantial than her imagination?"

"No, I do not."

"Has Pauline ever done anything which appears to you to indicate such a condition of affairs?"

"No. It is quite evident, Nick, that Pauline hates Irma as much as she once loved her, but I regard that feeling as the result of all that happened due to King's plottings and to Pauline's inherited vengeful nature. We must not forget that King had succeeded in convincing her before that time that it was John Y. who killed Henry Hastings, and you will agree with me that if a woman of Pauline's temperament is once convinced of such a thing, it is mighty hard to shake the idea out of her."

The detective nodded and was silent for a moment. Then he asked:

"Has Irma any logical reason for supposing that Pauline was instrumental in her father's death?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Upon what does she base her reasons for believing so?"

Congdon laughed.

"Whoever heard of a woman basing her reasons upon anything reasonable?" he asked jocularly.

"What was the stated cause of John Y.'s death?" asked Nick.

"Apoplexy."

"He died in a bed, did he?"

"Yes. We found him dead in his bed, at the hotel in Waco, where we were stopping temporarily. The three of us had been down through that part of Texas together, inspecting some of John Y.'s properties. We had returned to Waco, and had been in the hotel two days when his death occurred."

"There was an autopsy?" asked Nick.

"No; there was no autopsy. The local physician said there was no need of one. They pronounced the case one of apoplexy without hesitation."

"Where was Pauline at the time?"

"That," replied Congdon, "is the only thing in connection with the matter which gives Irma any real cause to believe her foster-sister responsible for John Y.'s death. Pauline was in Waco at the time. She went there to live immediately after the separation occurred. She called at the hotel that evening, to see John Y., and it is a fact that he was not seen alive by any other person after she left him."

"Still," mused the detective aloud, "if competent physicians announced his death to be due to apoplexy, there seems to be no reason to believe otherwise."

"None at all. I have tried to convince Irma of that fact, but it has been a fruitless effort."

"How did Pauline act following upon the death of John Y.?"

"In quite a natural way, I should suppose," replied Congdon. "She expressed a great deal of sorrow. She came to the hotel as soon as she heard about it, but Irma would have nothing whatever to do with her. She had refused to see her the preceding day, when Pauline called there."

"I suppose John Y.'s body was taken to Dallas for burial?"

"Yes; and right there is another point which Irma frequently refers to."

"What is it?"

"Pauline went with us from Waco to Dallas. She stayed at the Oriental Hotel while we were there. She attended the funeral as one of the chief mourners, and was in sight, a shrouded figure in black, until John Y. was buried, but at no time did she address Irma, nor did Irma speak to her. It was the night following the funeral that Irma first confessed to me her fears regarding Pauline."

"You refer to her belief that Pauline was responsible for the death of John Y.?"

"That and her own personal fears, both."

"Tell me what she said."

"Great Scott, Nick! I can't remember what she said, nor half of it."

"Well, tell me the substance of it."

"I can give you that in one sentence."

"Well?"

"In fact, I can quote one sentence that she used that night immediately after the funeral of her father. It was this: 'Jimmy,' she said to me, 'I know you will insist that it isn't so, but just so sure as I am alive at this minute, I believe that Pauline Hastings murdered my father, and that some day she will serve me in the same manner.'"

CHAPTER II.

THE WOMAN ON THE PIER.

"Have you ever taken these fears of your wife's seriously, Jimmy?" asked the detective, after a moment's pause.

"No, certainly not."

"In your own heart, you have no suspicion, then,

that Pauline had anything to do with the death of John Y. Ransom?"

"No."

"And you have not entertained such a suspicion at any time?"

"I have not."

"You believe that Irma's fears about the matter and about herself are entirely imaginary?"

"I most certainly do."

"Then, as I understand the situation, you regard your wife as morbid on the subject, and you wish to do something to cure her of that idea?"

"Yes."

"Well, Jimmy, it is my experience that when a woman gets such a thought in her head the only way to relieve her from it is to search back over her experiences until you find just what has produced that thought. When you have discovered that, then the method of disproving the idea is much easier to discover."

"Surely."

"So, Jimmy, if you will go back again to the moment when you last saw your father-in-law alive, and will tell me about your own experiences from that time on, and relate them from your wife's viewpoint, perhaps with our united intelligences we can get at it."

Congdon glanced at his watch again, lighted a fresh cigar, leaned back in his chair comfortably, and replied:

"As I stated a moment ago, we were in Waco, where we had determined to stay a few days before continuing our return to Dallas. We had been visiting several of the properties in which Irma's father was interested. I have always had an idea that John Y.'s desire to remain a few days in Waco was due to the presence there of Pauline. The old man had been very fond of Pauline. He could not have had a deeper affection for her had she really been his daughter. He never recovered from the shock of the separation from her, but even that was not half so severe upon him as was her attitude toward him. He knew, of course, that she had not only plotted against him with King, but that she had also believed and continued to believe that he was guilty of the murder of her own father.

"So, without his saying it, I was satisfied that we made our stop in Waco in order that he might see Pauline and talk with her. I do not know to this day whether he sent for her to come to him at the hotel, or if she called there of her own desire. I do know that she came in the afternoon and spent an hour or more with him, and that she returned again in the evening, about half-past eight or nine o'clock, and that they were closeted together in the parlor of his suite until a few minutes after ten."

"Do you mean," said Nick, interrupting Congdon, "that John Y. was never seen alive after Pauline left him?"

"Literally," replied Congdon, "that is the truth of the matter; but he was known to be alive after she took her departure, because one of the hall-boys carried a pitcher of ice-water to his room, and was told by John Y. to put it down outside the door and leave it there."

"Well, go on with your story."

"John Y. did not appear on the following morning. When we went to his room we found him dead in his bed. His clothing, which he had removed, was deposited with his usual care about the room, and everything about its arrangement and his own position on the bed was as natural as could be. The physician who was summoned at once unhesitatingly pronounced it apoplexy. In that decision he was upheld by two other physicians. It was decided that no autopsy was necessary."

"Well?" said the detective, when Congdon paused again.

"The news of John Y.'s death was heralded about the city at once. He was well known there, as he was, indeed, very generally throughout Texas, for, as you know, he had once been a Ranger, and was a prominent character. Pauline appeared again at the hotel about noon. She wore a heavy veil over her face, and she sent word to me that she would like to see the body. I went to her and greeted her; I took her into the room where the body had been laid out, preparatory to putting it in the casket."

"How did she conduct herself on that occasion?"

"Just as anybody else would under the same circumstances, and surrounded by the same conditions, I should say."

"She expressed sorrow?"

"Certainly."

"Not too much or too little of it, did she?"

"No; she was quite natural, I should say, knowing Pauline as I do. She was never an emotional girl, notwithstanding her appearance of it."

"I understand."

"I remained with her while she was in the room with the body of John Y."

"Did she ask to see Irma?"

"Yes, and I replied that Irma was greatly indisposed, and could not see her. I took that occasion to tell her very frankly that the former relations between her and Irma could never be reestablished, and that she would spare herself and Irma both unnecessary suffering if she would not seek to do so."

"How did she take that announcement from you?"

"Very calmly and quite generously, I thought. In a word, Nick, she acted as any lady would do under the circumstances."

"She went away then? She left the hotel at once?"

"Yes; but she asked me when we intended to start for Dallas. I told her, and she announced that she would accompany us on the same train, but assured me that she would not seek to intrude her presence upon Irma, and would not speak to Irma unless Irma spoke to her. Of course, I could not prevent her from going to Dallas on the same train with us. I would not have done so if I could."

"Well, go on with your story."

"She did go with us, as I have already told you. She stopped at the Oriental Hotel, in Dallas. She attended the funeral, and accompanied the body to the grave. My wife and I remained in Dallas for several weeks after that, for I was busily engaged in settling and arranging John Y.'s affairs. When that was done, my wife and I went to our home in Kansas City."

Congdon paused and remained silent several moments, then he continued:

"It was about a month after that when Irma, upon returning home one evening, after a visit down-town, announced with considerable excitement that she had passed Pauline on the street near the Junction, by which local name that point where Delaware and Main Streets come together is known."

"Yes," said the detective.

"Since that time, which was approximately six months ago, Irma has frequently returned to me with the announcement that she has seen Pauline upon the street, or on a car, or elsewhere. Each time the encounter has seemed to affect her more seriously than on former occasions, and I don't mind admitting to you that I decided upon this present trip abroad merely because it would take Irma away from the possibility of these chance encounters with Pauline."

"Have you yourself seen Pauline at any of the times your wife spoke about it?"

"No; and that is rather an odd circumstance."

"Have you made any effort to see her at such times?"

"Yes, Nick, I have. I have searched for her, for it was only a couple of weeks ago when I decided to have a talk with Pauline about it, and to ask her to oblige me by keeping out of Irma's sight, if possible."

"But you did not see her?"

"No."

"How did it happen that you could not find her?"

Congdon straightened in his chair, and half-turned so that he faced the detective squarely, then he replied:

"To tell you the truth, Nick, I don't believe that Pauline Hastings was anywhere near Irma at such times. I have been forced to the conclusion that those glimpses of Pauline did not exist in fact, but were due entirely to Irma's imagination, and to some chance resemblance between Pauline and some woman, or different women, that Irma saw."

"If that is true," said Nick, "Irma's condition is rather serious."

"That is precisely the conclusion at which I have arrived."

Congdon looked at his watch again as he ceased speaking, and then got slowly upon his feet, remarking as he did so:

"I think, Nick, that I will go below and find my wife. She must have got things to rights by this time, and she will be expecting me. Will you go along? She will be glad to see you."

"Certainly," replied the detective, rising.

They started away together along the deck of the ship, and on that side of it which was next to the pier at which the vessel was moored. The planks had already been drawn out upon the wharf, and the lines of the vessel were being cast off as they started. The twin propellers were just beginning to move, and the ship was already swinging away from the dock, and Congdon and Nick paused for a moment, side by side, peering through one of the wide openings of the great pier.

Suddenly Congdon gripped Nick Carter's arm fiercely, and exclaimed, in a voice that was filled with suppressed excitement:

"Look there, Nick! Look yonder on the pier!"

"Where? Who do you see?" asked the detective.

"I saw Pauline Hastings," replied Congdon; "but she disappeared in the crowd almost as soon as I got a glimpse of her. Come on, Nick. Let's go to Irma at once."

CHAPTER III.

PAULINE HASTINGS: A MYSTERY.

The two men lost no time in hurrying below to the room which had been assigned to Congdon and his wife, the young lawyer from Kansas City taking the lead and not hesitating to push and jostle aside any and all persons who chanced to get in his way.

They came to the room presently, and Congdon glanced at the number of it, to make sure there was no mistake. Then he tried the handle of the door, to discover that it was locked against him.

He did not hesitate when he discovered that fact, but with fierce impetuosity flung himself bodily against it, bursting it from its fastenings and so forcing it open.

When he sprang through into the room, Nick Carter was directly behind him, and one of the stewards, who had heard the crash, appeared upon the scene at the same moment. The purser also happened to be near at hand, and, attracted by the noise and by Congdon's cry which followed it, rushed forward also.

There was reason for Congdon's exclamation.

The berth, as a room aboard a steamship is called, contained two bunks, one above the other, while opposite them, and directly beneath the port-hole, was a stationary couch, covered by a plush cushion.

Upon this couch, with her head resting upon a pillow, but quite dead, as was at once apparent, was Irma Congdon.

There was not a mark of any kind upon her to indicate that violence had been used in accomplishing her death. Indeed, her position and pose were quite natural, and, aside from a drawn expression about her features which indicated that death had come with a shock accompanied by some pain, everything appeared as though she had died naturally after lying down upon the couch to rest.

Congdon was for a time inconsolable. Usually a self-contained man, master of his emotions, he was for the time beside himself before the horror by which he found himself confronted.

In an instant he had become transformed from a quiet and self-contained individual into a man with a set purpose and set belief regarding which we will know more later.

Nick Carter led him away with difficulty, and occupied the next few moments in an endeavor to quiet him, taking the opportunity, however, to give some hasty instructions to the purser and the stewards who had rushed to the spot, and at once thinking far enough ahead to suggest that a tug be signaled to come to the vessel in midstream, to take Congdon and the dead body of his wife, and, of course, Nick Carter, with them, back to the city. It must be borne in mind that, although Congdon had so excitedly announced his fleeting glimpse of Pauline Hastings on the pier as the ship was leaving it, Nick Carter himself had not seen her.

Still, he had no reason to believe that Congdon had not done so. The young lawyer had been talking calmly about the woman, and had just announced his belief that the reported frequent sights of Pauline by Irma were purely imaginative; it was not, therefore, supposable that Congdon would himself, and without reason, suddenly become a victim of the same sort of hallucination.

Nick Carter had, therefore, to suppose that James Congdon had not been mistaken in his belief that he saw Pauline Hastings on the pier. He was turning these things over in his mind with considerable care while he ministered to the stricken man, gradually restoring him to himself, so that presently Congdon stood upon his feet, calm and outwardly once more self-contained, but with a hard expression upon his features which betokened, Nick Carter thought, a fixed and immovable purpose.

"Jimmy," said the detective, "pull yourself together, old man. This is a hard blow, but you've got to meet it."

"I know it, Nick," was the low-toned reply.

"Bite on the bullet. Hold yourself in hand. We've got a lot to do in the next half-hour."

"Yes, Nick; you'll take the direction of affairs, won't you?"

"I'll do everything, Jimmy; and I only want you to do exactly what I tell you."

"I will."

"Then sit right where you are until I call you."

"Yes."

"Don't order anything to drink, Jimmy. Pull yourself together without it."

"All right, Nick, I won't."

"I'm going now to attend to Irma, old chap. We must take her ashore, but I don't think we can do it before we get to Quarantine. In the meantime, I will obtain the necessary affidavits, and as the captain and several of the officers of the ship are well known to me, I think I will experience no difficulty."

We need not enlarge upon the methods by which Nick Carter carried out his announced purpose. Suffice it to say that the tug which had been signaled to

the vessel's side by Nick Carter's direction presently received the detective, with Congdon and his dead wife and their baggage, and the vessel continued on its way across the ocean, while the tug returned slowly to the city on its sorrowful errand.

They went directly to the Barge Office at the Battery, from which Nick used the telephone to give such orders and directions as were necessary under the circumstances, and the body of Mrs. Congdon was presently removed to the offices of a burial company, where Nick had decided that an autopsy should be held, in order to discover, if possible, the cause of the young matron's death.

We will not weary the reader with details of the events of the ensuing forty-eight hours, after which, with the body of his wife embalmed and deposited in a hermetically sealed casket, Congdon departed for Dallas, Texas.

Nick Carter had decided to remain in New York, but before he parted with Congdon he said to him:

"I want you to hold yourself well in hand, Jimmy, throughout all the trying days and weeks that are to come. Don't forget that the greatest sorrows presently soften if we do not permit our minds to dwell morbidly upon them. Above all things, do not permit yourself to imagine Pauline Hastings' presence near you. If you should see her anywhere, even after your arrival at Dallas, be sure to speak with her. Ask her pointblank if she was in New York that day we were to sail for Europe. If you should imagine that you see her, be sure to speak to the person who induced that imagination. In either case, communicate with me by telegraph at once."

So they parted.

The autopsy held upon the body of Mrs. Congdon developed really nothing at all, save the fact that she had died as the result of an apoplectic condition, which was about as unsatisfactory a verdict upon her death as could be imagined. The doctors who performed it agreed that there was nothing about her physical condition to denote that she was an apoplectic subject; and yet the condition was there.

Aboard the ship, in the room where the body was found, nothing had been discovered to indicate that another person had been in the room with Irma just prior to her death, save one little thing which had remained unaccounted for.

Nick Carter, upon entering the room, just behind Congdon, at the time of the discovery, had seen a black kid glove of the long-wrist variety lying upon the floor, and had possessed himself of it. This glove later was found to be too large for Irma's use, and it was therefore presumable that it had belonged to another person who had dropped it there.

But whether the owner of the glove had actually been with Irma, or if it had been dropped upon the floor of that stateroom before she entered it, could not be determined, although it is a natural presumption that had it been there when Irma entered the room she would have picked it up and laid it aside, and not have left it lying upon the floor where Nick Carter later on found it.

This was the only evidence of the presence of any person with Irma Congdon just before her death.

The autopsy revealed nothing more than has been stated.

But there were, nevertheless, three facts about which the detective was greatly concerned, and because of which he determined to investigate Irma Congdon's death most thoroughly. These three facts were:

First, the supposed sight of Pauline Hastings upon the pier as obtained by James Congdon just as he and Nick Carter were leaving the deck to go below.

Second, the entire similarity of conditions in the deaths of Irma Congdon and of her father, six months previously, at Waco, Texas.

Third, the probability that some person at present unknown, but presumably a woman, had been with Irma in the room just before her death.

These facts Nick Carter determined to investigate.

If it should be found that Pauline Hastings was indeed in New York at the time of the sailing of the ship, if it should be further established that she had actually been aboard that ship, it would follow as logical reasoning that it was she who dropped the kid glove on the floor in Irma's room; and if she had been in that room with Irma just before the death of the latter, just as she had been in the room with Irma's father immediately before his death, there would be reason to direct suspicion toward her as being in some way accountable for both fatalities, at present unexplained.

Taking it all together, Pauline Hastings had suddenly developed into a mystery.

CHAPTER IV.

NICK CARTER FINDS A CLUE.

Pauline Hastings would be described as beautiful by any person who saw her.

She was tall and willowy of figure, as graceful as

a panther in her motions. She was dark almost to swarthiness, but, nevertheless, with a transparent complexion that rendered her strangely attractive. She had large, luminous, round black eyes which burned smolderingly under all conditions, save when they flashed forth ominously under excitement, or any kind of stress or strain. Her hair was coal-black, with a suggestion of waviness in it; her brow was wide and full, her teeth were perfect, and her manner was altogether charming when she chose to render it so.

Always there had been a suggestion of underlying depths in her.

Personally, Nick Carter had never seen her, save on the occasion of the arrest of Basil King, when she was present with him in the house where the capture was made, and on two brief occasions immediately following upon that incident.

But he had heard a great deal about her, and, in effect, felt that he knew her almost as well as if there had been a long and continued personal acquaintance.

In fact, as nearly as he was capable of judging, no one had ever known Pauline Hastings well, with perhaps the one exception of John Y. Ransom, her foster-father, who was now dead, and whose death had been charged to Pauline by his daughter, Irma, who had followed him to the grave six months later, and in almost precisely the same manner.

Before starting out on the quest he had determined to make, Nick Carter went over in his mind the incidents that were associated with the arrest and conviction of Basil King.*

He recalled the story that had been told to him at the time by James Congdon regarding Pauline's antecedents.

Her father, Henry Hastings, had been known in the Southwest as Henry Heaton, and had lived a life of outlawry along the border between Mexico on the one side and Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona on the other. He had been a bad man through and through, although the descendent of a good family in the East.

Pauline's mother was a Mexican woman of good family; but of a vengeful and passionate nature, as described by Congdon, who had asserted at the time his belief that Pauline had inherited the worst qualities of both her parents.

Indeed, she had demonstrated that fact in her plotting and planning with Basil King against the peace and happiness of her foster-father, John Y. Ransom.

It is true that King had played upon her naturally vengeful nature in convincing her that Hastings was murdered by Ransom, while he himself was really the actual criminal; but after the dénouement Pauline had refused to believe in John Y. Ransom's innocence and in Basil King's guilt. The palpable fact, therefore, remained that, if Pauline still retained her original belief in the guilt of Ransom, it would account, in a measure, for her supposed responsibility for the death of Ransom.

So far as Irma was concerned, if Pauline hated the father, she might logically, and in accordance with her characteristics, also have hated the daughter, and so desired vengeance upon all who bore the name of Ransom.

And there was another fact which the detective took into consideration while thinking upon these matters. It was this:

At that time, now approximately eighteen months ago, when Irma and her father and Pauline had mysteriously disappeared at the same time, there was in existence a will of Ransom's, drawn by King, which had disposed of his property equally between the two girls, and which had also stated that Pauline was not really his daughter, but had refrained from revealing who she really was.

That will, of course, had never amounted to anything more than a written statement, since a will does not become an actively legal document until the death of the testator.

But its contents had, nevertheless, become generally known, and that they had given more or less offense to Pauline could not be doubted.

When you add to this the fact that immediately after that time Ransom had made a new will, in which he left all he possessed to his daughter, it will be realized that he thus gave additional cause to Pauline for resentment, notwithstanding the fact that he had provided her at that time with a liberal annuity which was to continue through her life.

But she was, nevertheless, such a discarded and ostracized member of the Ransom family that there could be no doubt that she felt the changed conditions keenly, and attributed them not so much to her own errors as to the influence of Congdon and Irma.

With these conditions thoroughly in mind, but with a mental reservation to give Pauline Hastings the benefit of every doubt that occurred to him, Nick Carter started upon his quest.

He first visited the offices of the steamship company, and asked to see a copy of the passenger-list of that vessel upon which Irma Congdon had died.

It was his idea that if Pauline had visited New York

*See NICK CARTER WEEKLY, No. 616.

with the express purpose in her mind of doing violence to Irma she would have engaged passage upon the ship, not being certain that she could accomplish her ends before it should sail away.

From the list he selected several names of women who appeared to be traveling alone, and communicated by wireless with the vessel at sea, to discover who among them had failed to take passage after engaging it. Aside from himself and Congdon and his wife, there was but one such: a woman who was registered as Caroline Betts, and he was not greatly surprised to receive in reply the information that no such person as described was known there.

With this information in his possession, he again sought the steamship office of the company, and ultimately found the clerk who had booked the passage for Caroline Betts; and again he was not greatly surprised to find that the clerk remembered the woman perfectly well, and that her description tallied almost exactly with the appearance of Pauline Hastings.

Here, you will admit, was another important and significant fact connecting Pauline with Irma Congdon's death; although there was ever present in Nick Carter's mind the fact that the autopsy had proved nothing in the shape of a crime.

The detective recalled one fact connected with the case which might be productive of results, and he acted upon it immediately.

He remembered that when he and Congdon left their chairs on the deck that day to go below, just at the moment when Congdon exclaimed that he saw Pauline Hastings upon the pier, he had himself seen the face of an acquaintance who was standing quite near the spot indicated by Congdon as the place where he had seen Pauline.

Nick sought and found that acquaintance, and he said to him:

"Billy, I have come to you about a matter which will seem extremely trivial, but I have an idea that you can help me out if you will make a sincere effort to do so."

"All right, Nick. Go ahead. You always do have queer ideas."

"Do you remember being on the pier when a steamship was about to sail last Wednesday afternoon?"

"I certainly do. I went down there to see the last of Jack Pearsall, who was going to Europe for a year."

"Do you recall where you were standing when the lines of the steamship were cast off and the gangplanks drawn ashore?"

"Yes, I was talking with Sam Lawrence, who had gone with me to see Pearsall off. We had just gone ashore, not five minutes before."

"Did you notice any of the people who were standing near you, or about you?"

"Not particularly."

"Now, Billy, you always have had an eye for beautiful women."

"Right you are, Nick."

"Didn't you see one that day?"

"Didn't I see one? I saw a bunch of 'em."

"Try and remember if you did not see one who attracted you rather more than any of the others."

"By jingo, you're right about that. I did."

"Can you describe her to me?"

"Can I describe her to you? What are you getting at? How the duse can I describe a woman to you when I haven't the least idea which one you mean."

"I want you to describe to me the woman whom you say that day attracted you most. If she doesn't happen to be the one, I'll ask you to describe the next best."

"You're a queer chap, Nick. I don't in the least know what you're getting at, but I'll try."

"All right. Go ahead."

"Well, you know for one thing, I don't take much interest in blondes; brunettes are my choice."

"Yes, go on, Billy."

"So, if it's a blonde you're looking for——"

"Never mind what I'm looking for. Do what I have asked you to do."

"Well, there was a brunette whom I saw that day that I think was about the most stunning woman I ever saw. She was tall and as supple as a panther, and she had a pair of eyes that burned and glowed and sparkled like hot coals. She stood right near to me at the moment you spoke about when the lines of the ship were cast off, and she was staring at somebody on the deck of the ship so fiercely that it made me shudder. I was just about to make some remark to Sam when she turned away and disappeared in the crowd."

"Did you see me on the deck of that ship, Billy?"

"No, I didn't."

"Was there any peculiarity that you may have noticed, that you can describe to me about the woman?"

"No; unless an expression that she made use of as she turned away would be of service to you."

"Perhaps it would. What did she say?"

"I heard her mutter so that the words scarcely

reached me, although I was entirely conscious of them. 'Good-by, Irma. I hope you'll enjoy your voyage!' "

CHAPTER V.

THE WOMAN AT BAY.

It seemed to the detective as though he had pretty thoroughly established the fact that Pauline Hastings had visited the ship that day before it sailed. There was no doubt in his mind now that James Congdon did see her upon the pier, and, therefore, that it was her glove which he had picked up in Irma's room.

He decided not to await messages from Congdon, who had gone to Dallas with the body of his wife, but departed that night on the train himself, believing that Pauline would lose no time in returning to her home now that her mission in visiting New York was accomplished—if it had been her purpose to slay Irma Congdon.

He arrived in Dallas twenty-four hours after Congdon got there, and was present at the last rites performed over the body of Irma before it was deposited in the grave.

"Now, Jimmy," he said to his friend, after they had returned to the hotel, "I want you to go back to Kansas City and take up your work as methodically as you can. I won't ask you to forget your troubles because it will be impossible to do that, but I will ask you to think upon them as lightly as you can, and to endeavor to forget that there is such a person in the world as Pauline Hastings."

"I'll never forget that, Nick," was the reply. "I am entirely converted to Irma's belief. She killed my wife."

"But you're not going to do anything about it or try to do anything about it, are you, Jimmy?"

"No, Nick, I'm going to leave it all to you. I'm going to do just as you direct me. I'll go back to Kansas City as you say, and go to work. I am content to leave the whole thing in your hands."

"Have you seen anything of Pauline Hastings since you left New York?"

"No."

"Or heard from her?"

"No."

"Have you sent any message to her or communicated with her at all?"

"I have not."

"Have you made any inquiries about her since you have been in Dallas?"

"Just one, Nick."

"What was that?"

"I met an acquaintance of hers at the hotel entrance early this morning, and I asked him where Pauline was. He said he thought she was in Waco."

"You mean by that, I suppose, that he only thought so. He didn't really know?"

"I didn't ask him, Nick. I asked him where she was, and he replied that he thought she was in Waco. That is all that was said about it. I changed the subject, and we parted."

Nick saw his friend off on the train for Kansas City that evening, and himself boarded a later one which would take him to Waco, for he had already, by the aid of the police of Dallas, convinced himself that Pauline was not in the city of Dallas.

His determination was to go directly to her if he could find her, and, perhaps, charge her with the crimes she was suspected of having committed. However, he was determined to be governed in that matter by the circumstances and conditions which might surround them during the interview.

It was midday when he arrived at Waco, and shortly after one o'clock when he got down at the door of the house where Pauline Hastings lived.

She was standing upon the steps of the piazza as he passed through the gate, and it was evident that she recognized him instantly, although she gave no sign of the fact other than by a deepening of the burning glow in her strange black eyes.

She stood like a statue while he approached her along the pathway which extended forty or fifty feet from the gate to the steps whereon she was standing.

"How do you do, Miss Hastings?" he greeted her.

There was a curl of contemptuous scorn upon her lips as she regarded him steadily without replying, and after gazing at him a full minute in this manner, she demanded:

"Why are you here, Nick Carter?"

"I have come," he replied, "to have a short interview with you, Miss Hastings."

"For what purpose and to what end?"

"Won't you admit me to the house before I reply to that question?" he asked.

She turned without a word and led him through the open doorway and into a room at the right of the hall where she paused in the middle of the floor, facing him, and without asking him to be seated.

"Well?" she demanded, when he did not speak. "State your business, Nick Carter!"

"My call here, Miss Hastings, is not exactly one

of business. May I inquire if you have heard of the sudden death of your foster-sister?"

"I have no foster-sister."

"Have you heard about the death of Mrs. Congdon?"

"Yes."

"May I ask when you heard about it?"

"You may ask, of course, but I need not reply. I don't know how it concerns you."

"Do you know when and where and how she died?"

"I think I am aware of all the particulars," she replied coldly.

"Then you know that she was found dead in her room aboard the ship upon which she and her husband had taken passage to Europe?"

"Yes."

"Isn't it true, Miss Hastings, that you stood upon the pier in New York when the lines, which bound that steamship to it, were cast off?" he asked, slowly and distinctly.

"It is quite true," she replied coolly.

"You admit it, then?"

"There is no reason why I should deny it."

"Why were you there?"

"That is entirely my own affair, Nick Carter. It is none of your business why I was there."

"I have been obliged to make it my business," he replied.

She shrugged her shoulders and crossed the room until she stood beside the door; but she made no reply, and her attitude was one of waiting for him to pass outside the house.

Instead of doing so, he leisurely and coolly dropped upon a chair that was near at hand, and said:

"There are some things, Miss Hastings, which you must explain to me before I leave this house, unless you wish to leave it with me under the charge of deliberately murdering Irma Congdon."

She laughed aloud; laughed literally in the detective's face; but there was no mirth in her laughter.

"You deal in heroics, Nick Carter," she said, leaning gently against the casing of the doorway. "There is an old recipe about cooking a hare which directs one to catch it first. Before you charge me with a crime it would be well to establish the existence of one. I was in New York, yes. I was on the pier as you say, but it is none of your business why I was there, and so far as your threats of connecting me with Irma's death are concerned"—she snapped her fingers—"that for them."

"There are certain poisons, Pauline, which produce the effect of apoplexy," said the detective, without moving from his attitude.

She shrugged her shoulders and did not reply.

He continued:

"About six months ago, Irma's father died in a hotel here in this city. His death was brought about in the same manner as Irma's. The conditions were about the same. You had been alone with him not long before his death, just as I know you to have been alone with Irma immediately before hers."

The woman regarded him steadily while he was talking, and, save that the fitful glow in her eyes deepened in its smoldering brilliancy, there was no change in her expression. Outwardly she appeared entirely unmoved by what he said, and unaffected by the charges he was making through implication.

It was evident to Nick Carter that if Pauline were guilty of these two crimes, or of either of them, she had carefully considered beforehand every move that was made and every consequence that was to follow.

She was only too evidently forearmed and well prepared for any emergency that might arise, and the fact that she was not surprised by the charge the detective had made against her, was apparent.

It was supposable that she had expected it; it might be supposable that she had even invited it, and Nick Carter looked upon her now in wondering amazement, for the moment doubting if he had done wisely in openly charging her with the responsibility for Irma's death.

"Have you quite done?" she demanded of him presently.

"I think so, for the present," he replied.

"Then go! I do not want you here!"

"If I go now, Pauline, I must take you with me."

She laughed at him again.

"You talk like a fool, Nick Carter; and you are not that," she said. "Who do you suppose in this city would give you a warrant for my arrest on the flimsy charges you can make? Don't you suppose that I know you have no such warrant, and don't you understand that I know you cannot procure one? I am not a fool, Nick Carter, even if you have permitted yourself to believe me one. You cannot arrest me without a warrant, and you cannot get one. You cannot take me away from this house without authority to do so, and that you do not possess."

She paused, and her burning eyes took upon themselves an expression of mockery; her mobile lips curled with scornful derision; for a moment she showed her beautiful teeth in the ghost of a contemptuous smile.

and then she turned about, passed into the hallway, and coolly ascended the stairs, leaving the detective to take his own departure from the house as he would, apparently indifferent as to whether he should go or stay.

And Nick Carter, after a moment of deep thought, slowly left the house.

CHAPTER VI.

BASIL KING: CONVICT.

The reader who is familiar with detective work may, perhaps, criticize Nick Carter for going directly to Pauline Hastings and openly charging her with the crime, as he had done.

But Nick Carter always followed his own judgment in these matters, and he was invariably dependent upon surrounding circumstances as well as upon the reading of the character of the person or persons against whom he had to contend.

There are some criminals who are better left without knowledge that they are suspected, and who, believing themselves unsuspected, will ultimately commit some act of self-betrayal in a feeling of too great a security.

There are others who, if they believe themselves suspected, are the more likely to commit some act, or make use of some expression, which will give a shrewd detective the necessary starting-point to convict them.

Nick Carter believed Pauline Hastings belonged to this latter class.

He looked upon her as a woman who was competent and capable beyond her kind, who was fiercely insistent upon carrying out to the end any task she had set herself to do.

Pauline was naturally defiant just as she was thoroughly courageous.

She did not know fear, as most women understand the term, and it was certain that she regarded Nick Carter with no other emotion save that of extreme dislike, and with utter scorn concerning the abilities he was supposed to possess.

The detective had therefore followed out his own reading of her character in acting as he had done, and now, having fulfilled his ideas, he was content to wait until she should make a move of some kind in the matter.

But while waiting, he determined to improve the time, and, to that end, he boarded the first train out of the city which would take him to the prison where Basil King was confined.

It had occurred to him, during that interview with Pauline, that a talk with Basil King might be productive of results, although he had no idea in what manner it might be so.

But at least it would be interesting to talk with the man; to discuss with him the personality of Pauline—with whom Basil King had once doubtless been very much in love, notwithstanding the fact that she was related to him, since her father, Henry Hastings—otherwise Heaton—the outlaw had been Basil King's half-brother.

The fact remained that aside from King's undoubted affection for Pauline the two had once plotted together, and there would, therefore, be a bond of sympathy still existing between them which would have its effect upon King in his imprisonment, much more than upon Pauline, if, indeed, the man had ever moved her at all, which Nick Carter doubted.

The detective had no difficulty in making his arrangements at the prison for a protracted interview with King.

The warden of the prison went so far as to bring the "lifer" into the parlor of his own private apartment, and to leave him there alone with the detective.

Save for the prison garb and the closely cropped hair, King was outwardly the same as when Nick Carter last saw him.

He was still the florid-faced, keen-eyed, heavy-jawed man, thoroughly master of himself and coolly alive to every circumstance that concerned him.

He seemed to know even before Nick Carter opened the conversation what purpose had brought the detective there to see him; that is, he seemed to be aware that it was to discuss Pauline Hastings, although Nick Carter presently found that the Texan had no knowledge of the recent death of Irma Congdon.

But Nick Carter did not refer to that fact at once; he preferred to approach it gradually, and so began by mentioning the death of Irma's father, and he did it in a careless manner which referred to it only as an incident that was associated with their own acquaintance.

"The man whom you once abducted has died since I saw you last, King," he said, and he gave the convict a cigar and a match to light it with, adding: "The warden has given me permission to indulge you in all the smoking you care to do."

The prisoner waved the cigar aside with his characteristic smile and replied:

"I won't smoke the cigar, Carter, thank you all the same. It would get me into bad habits. It would make me want more of them, which I cannot obtain. I have learned to do without them quite comfortably, and I don't care to fight the battle over again. But you didn't come here to talk about Jack Ransom, Carter; you came to talk about Pauline, didn't you?"

"Yes," replied the detective coolly, while he lighted his cigar, "I came to talk about Pauline."

"I suppose," said King, laughing, "that Irma has charged her with murdering Ransom, hasn't she?"

"Irma has permitted herself to suspect Pauline," replied the detective evasively.

King chuckled audibly.

"I'll tell you one thing about it, Carter, and you can take it from me as being mighty near the truth."

"All right," said Nick, "what is it?"

"If Pauline Hastings had anything to do with the death of Jack Ransom, you'll never find it out, and nobody but herself will ever know the truth."

"Not even you, King?"

"Bah! How should I know it, locked up here as I am?"

"You might know of other facts connected with it which would be sufficient knowledge for you."

"I might, but I don't."

"It is certain, isn't it, that she hated Ransom?"

"I reckon that there's no doubt about that."

"It is also certain, is it not, that she was always convinced of your innocence and his guilt of the death of her father?"

"I don't think that there's any doubt about that, either."

"It follows, therefore, doesn't it, that she would continue to seek vengeance just as she did at the time when you and she plotted together?"

King chuckled again.

"Pauline isn't one of the kind to let go," he said, with a light laugh. "I would rather have a regiment of men down on me than to know that she was on my trail."

"Has she ever been here to see you, King, since you have been confined here?"

"Sure, she comes every week."

"Every Sunday, I suppose, eh?"

"No; every Thursday."

"She'll have some news to tell you, King, when she comes again."

"Will she? What is it?"

"Irma is dead."

"What?"

King was plainly surprised.

Nick Carter repeated the information, and King uttered a low whistle to express his amazement.

"She died in precisely the same manner that her father did," the detective continued, after a short pause.

"Apoplexy, eh?" said King.

"Or poison," replied the detective solemnly.

King stared at Nick Carter for a moment and then burst into loud laughter.

"It seems to amuse you," said the detective.

"Oh, no, Carter. It doesn't amuse me at all; believe me. I am really sorry, indeed, about Irma; sorry that she should have been taken off in the midst of her young life and almost at the beginning of her happiness. I've got a lot of heart, Carter, underneath this tough skin of mine, whether you believe it or not, and even if I have been an outlaw and almost everything that was bad. I wasn't laughing at that, Carter. I was laughing at you."

"How did I happen to amuse you?"

"I laughed because I saw through your purpose in coming here to see me."

"Yes?" said Nick. "That will make it easier."

"You thought that, perhaps, I could tell you something which would help you to connect Pauline criminally with these two deaths."

"Well?"

"Carter, I'll be frank with you."

"I wish you would."

"I couldn't tell you if I tried a single thing that would be of assistance to you in that matter, and if I could give you any such information—if I possessed it—I'd see you ten thousand times hung first."

"That is surely an emphatic statement," remarked the detective, smiling.

"If it isn't emphatic enough, you can multiply it just as many times as you please."

"I suppose, King," said the detective, with an abrupt change of the subject, "that your present general appearance of good health and contentment is largely due to the fact that you do not expect always to remain here, isn't it?"

"I'd be a fool if I didn't expect to get out some time."

"Do you look for a pardon, King?"

"I think I may reasonably hope for one after I have been here a few years."

"Is there anything I can do for you outside? Would you like me to send you some books to read?"

"Nothing, Carter, thank you."

There was nothing said after that which is worthy of repetition here, and presently Nick Carter took his leave, but, before parting with the warden of the prison, he said to him:

"Warden, I am coming back here Thursday to spend the day with you, if you will permit it."

"I should be glad to have you, Mr. Carter."

"I don't want to pass that day as your guest, warden, but I want to obtain your help to utilize it in quite another manner."

"Well, what?" asked the warden.

"I have discovered that King has a visitor every Thursday. I don't know in just what manner you permit that interview to take place when the woman comes here, but on this particular occasion, this coming Thursday, I would like very much to have it arranged so that they can see each other alone without its appearing that the opportunity was purposely arranged for them. Do you think it can be done?"

"Sure. I know exactly how to do it. I have always let them converse on a bench in one of the corridors of the prison with a guard standing near, but I see no reason why they might not be allowed more liberty than that. I could have something going on in the prison which would disturb them, and I could offer them the use of the same parlor you have made use of to-day. Now, what else is there?"

"Only this, warden: I want to fix up some plan whereby I can overhear that interview."

"That's dead easy," said the warden, laughing. "You leave all the details to me, Mr. Carter, and come here Thursday morning. I will have it arranged for you."

With this understanding the detective took his departure and presently boarded the train for Waco, for he had determined to keep a close watch upon Pauline until he was satisfied that she was guilty or innocent of the death of Irma Congdon.

To this end, he had already summoned Patsy from New York, and he had no doubt that he would find his second assistant waiting for him in Waco when he should arrive there.

His only idea in being present at the interview which would take place the following Thursday between King and Pauline, was that during the conversation between them King would refer to Nick Carter's call at the prison, and the purpose of it, and that the subject thus introduced would be discussed more or less freely between them.

Nick desired to overhear that discussion. He believed that during it he would discover some expression, or hear some statement that would be of assistance to him in the future.

CHAPTER VII.

PATSY TURNS BURGLAR.

The train which deposited the detective at the station in Waco was not due until midnight, and it was over an hour late.

As Nick Carter left the car in which he had been a passenger and hurried across the platform, determined to walk to his hotel, a figure glided swiftly from behind a pile of trunks and followed after him, not, however, without the detective's perceiving the fact.

"Pauline has already taken the initiative," was his mental comment as he noticed it; but he continued briskly on his way up the street, thinking that he would pay no more attention to the fact that he was followed.

Knowing that he had a pursuer behind him, he naturally paid very little attention to what was passing in front, and so did not notice two men who were standing in apparent idleness, as if conversing together, beside a hack, the door of which was swinging open.

The detective had to pass between these men and the hack, and, as he was in the act of doing so, one of them swung out his arm viciously, and, before Nick Carter suspected that an attack was made upon him, he received a terrific blow against the side of his head delivered with a brass knuckle, and he pitched headlong to the ground directly beside the open door.

Instantly the two men sprang upon him, and before he could do anything to defend himself he received other blows, and was lifted and thrown bodily into the hack, followed by the two men who had attacked him, and these slammed the door shut, while the third one who had been following behind leaped upon the box, seized the reins, and drove rapidly away.

The attack had been so sudden and was so entirely unexpected that Nick Carter was rendered helpless before he had an opportunity to defend himself.

The terrific blow he received from the brass knuckle rendered him, of itself, almost unconscious, and the second and third ones delivered when he had fallen, so nearly completed the effect, that he was only dimly aware of what was happening after that.

He knew that his arms were drawn tightly behind him and tied there, and that a gag was thrust into his mouth and fastened, but he had no power to resist these efforts against him; and so in much less time than it has taken to tell of it, he was a helpless prisoner firmly bound, and was being swiftly borne away, he knew not whither.

We must leave him there for the present moment and go to the hotel whither he was bound when attacked.

In one of the two rooms he occupied Patsy Garvan was seated, having arrived there in the early part of that same evening. Patsy had found a note awaiting him upon the table, which told rather tersely that the detective had gone to the prison to visit Basil King, and would return on the train on which we have already seen him arrive.

Patsy through the open window had heard the train rush in at the station, and had waited more than an adequate time for the detective to have arrived at the hotel, coming from it. He left his chair, and, hat in hand, started for the door, thinking that he would go down to the entrance and await the detective there, but, as he opened the door, he came face to face with a uniformed messenger who held in his hand a sealed envelope with the imprint of a telegraph company upon it. The envelope was addressed to Patrick Garvan in the care of Nicholas Carter, and, tearing it open, Patsy read the following message:

"Detained here. Wait where you are for further instructions. N. C."

Patsy signed for the message, gave the boy a tip, and returned to the room where he read the message again. He had no thought, however, that it was not from Nick Carter, and presently he threw aside his clothing and retired.

The following morning after his breakfast he strolled about the business part of the city for an hour or two, all the while wishing that his chief had been a little more definite in his instructions, believing that he might as well be utilizing the time in some manner while he was awaiting the detective's return. He really thought that the evening would bring him a letter from Nick, but it came and went without one, as did the following morning.

And it was late in the afternoon of his second day of waiting that it occurred to Patsy that he would take the initiative, and he would himself endeavor to get into communication with his chief. He went to the telephone and called up the prison where Basil King was confined and asked for the warden.

"I want to speak with Nick Carter," he told the warden when the connection was made; and he was presently surprised and considerably troubled when he was told that the detective had left the city by the train he had originally intended to take.

Still Patsy did not believe that anything could have happened to Nick Carter. His own idea when he thought about it was that the part of Nick's message expressed by the words "detained here," had indicated that Nick had found some other clue which he intended to follow, and that he would send another message to Waco as soon as there was anything definite to be said.

So Patsy possessed himself in patience for another day, but at the end of that time he had become so anxious that he took the first train out, notwithstanding Nick's supposed order for him to remain where he was. He went directly to the warden at the prison and discovered there what we already know. He waited later for the same train that had borne Nick Carter back to Waco, and from the conductor found out that Nick had been a passenger upon it that night of the receipt of the telegram.

One of the brakemen remembered positively that Nick Carter had left the train all right when it arrived at Waco more than an hour late, and told Patsy about his starting away across the platform to walk to his hotel.

All of this was sufficient to satisfy the young assistant that all was not well with Nick Carter, and that the telegram Patsy had received was a fake.

He spent the remainder of that night and all of the next day—which was the Thursday when Nick had intended to be at the prison again—in endeavoring to find some trace of his chief, but there was absolutely nothing that developed to afford him any clue to what had happened.

It was plain to Patsy that if Nick Carter had been attacked and made to disappear, there could be only one person who was responsible for it, and that would be Pauline Hastings.

Patsy had made no effort to look her up, or to see her, since his arrival in Waco. He had obeyed literally the instructions in the telegram which he believed until now was from Nick Carter; but at noon that Thursday he had himself driven to the house where Pauline lived, and he rang at the door-bell several times before a burly negro appeared in response to the summons.

"I want to see Miss Hastings," said Patsy, with sharp decision in his voice and manner.

"She ain't here," was the surly reply.

"Where is she?"

"Dunno, sah. You'll have to call again, sah. She ain't here," and with that the negro closed the door and bolted it inside.

Patsy stood there for a moment thinking deeply. Then he turned about and had himself driven swiftly to the chief of the city police to whom he related all that had occurred.

As may naturally be supposed, the chief pooh-poohed all idea that anything had happened to Nick Carter, or could happen to him in the city of Waco; or that, if anything had happened, Pauline Hastings could in any way be held accountable for it.

The reader must understand that Pauline Hastings was something of a personage in that locality. No breath of any suspicion had ever been whispered against her. She had an income which rendered her almost a rich woman, and she lived in a house, the possession of which was envied by many. Nobody had ever suggested that her life had not always been what it should be, and no person had ever associated her with the death of her foster-father, whose liberality in bestowing the annuity upon her had been regarded merely as an added evidence of the affection between them.

In effect she was among the most respected and admired of the women of the city, and the idea suggested by Patsy to the chief of police that Nick Carter could be imprisoned in her house, or that she could have been in any way instrumental in his disappearance, was regarded as utterly preposterous.

And the chief did not hesitate to say so to Patsy Garvan. He said it flatly and emphatically; and he intimated quite as plainly that he had no time to discuss such a matter.

Patsy returned to the hotel.

He stood before the mirror in Nick's room and addressed his own reflection as he saw it there.

"It's up to you, Patsy," he said. "You can't get any assistance from anybody down here, and the whole case against Pauline is of such character that I don't know as they can be blamed for refusing it. It's up to you, Patsy, and you've got to go it alone."

It was half-past five in the afternoon by that time, and Patsy smoked cigars and pondered until he was summoned to dinner; after dinner he returned to the room and smoked more cigars in solitude.

But he had already determined what to do, and to do it that night.

Patsy was going to turn burglar.

If the negro was truthful in his statement that Pauline was absent from the city, and Patsy, remembering his conversation with the warden of the prison believed it, there would be all the better opportunity for searching her house after he should enter it by stealth that night, as he firmly intended to do.

Shortly before midnight he began his preparations.

He had gone to Waco amply provided with every means for altering his appearance, and of adopting whatsoever disguise his business there might warrant.

It was, therefore, not difficult for him presently to change himself into a very passable specimen of the ordinarily accepted idea of a midnight burglar.

He pulled a wig of thick black hair tightly over his head. He dyed his face and hands to a swarthy hue, he donned a flannel shirt that looked as if it might have been worn a week or a month without changing, but which was nevertheless clean, and with the other necessary additions to his disguise, not forgetting a black half-mask which he deposited in one of the side pockets of his coat, he left the hotel shortly before two o'clock in the morning to carry out his design.

On his way to Pauline's house, as he passed a saloon not far from the railway-station, he saw through the window of it, seated at a table with a schooner of beer in front of him, the same negro with whom he had spoken at Pauline's door that day.

Convinced now that the guard was momentarily off duty and that the way would be much more easy before him, he went onward upon his errand.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN AMUSING ENCOUNTER.

The residence occupied by Pauline Hastings when she was at home was a pretentious one in many respects. It was surrounded by a liberal growth of trees, and was approached by a wide pathway from the front gate.

As soon as Patsy passed the gate he left this pathway and darted among the trees, for, while it was quite possible that he might have entered the house through the front door by means of his pick-lock and skeleton keys, he preferred the ordinary method that a burglar would have used, inasmuch as he would by that means leave behind him the only evidence that he wished to have remain.

He wanted it to appear that the house had been entered by a genuine burglar in case there should be any hue and cry after the event.

Patsy's ideas concerning what he might do after he entered the house were not very clear.

He had quite vaguely an idea that Nick Carter was imprisoned inside it, for he could imagine no other means of hiding his chief away so thoroughly as had been done.

He was resolved at all events to search it from top to bottom, and to use the opportunity thus obtained to make as thorough an investigation as possible of Pauline Hastings' private papers in the hope that even if he did not find the detective there, he might discover something that would materially aid in her conviction for the crimes with which Nick Carter, and, therefore, Patsy himself, charged her.

He had provided himself with a very competent jimmy—the short crowbar which burglars use in prying open doors and windows and in removing other impediments to their free access to buildings they wish to enter.

A broad piazza with a roof over it ran along the front of the house and part way down one side, and against it, where it had covered the side of the house, was a long trellis which supported a climbing rose-bush. This afforded just the opportunity Patsy desired, and, first testing its strength, he mounted rapidly to the roof of the piazza across which he quickly clambered to one of the windows. It was locked, as he supposed it would be, but it required very little skill for him to insert the edge of the jimmy beneath the sash, and, by prying, to dislocate the catch which held the window, and so to raise it.

He stepped through into a darkened room, and paused there, waiting and listening, for, although he had made no sound that could have penetrated for any considerable distance, he was none the less alive to the fact that if there were a prisoner within the house as he suspected, there would more than likely be some one on guard over him.

He heard nothing, however, and so presently he pressed upon the button of his electric torch, discovering thereby that he was inside a small room near the top of the stairway, which had been furnished with a desk and a couch and some books and pictures as if it were a small lounging-room where the owner of the house retired to write her letters or to read.

He waited there long enough to familiarize himself with his surroundings, and to assure himself that his approach had not been heard, and then he passed stealthily through the curtained doorway and descended the stairs toward the ground floor, for he had decided to begin his search in the cellar of the house, that being, he thought, the more likely place where Nick Carter would be confined if he were indeed a helpless prisoner there.

He was exceedingly careful as he descended the stairs to make no noise at all, and this was not a difficult feat to accomplish, since they were thickly padded and carpeted. He might easily have run down them in an ordinary manner without giving out any sound.

At the foot of them he paused. He thought he had detected a slight clicking noise from one of the rooms on that floor, but as he listened, and it was not repeated, he was reassured; but, nevertheless, he passed into the front room, the door of which was widely ajar.

It was the same room in which Nick Carter had interviewed Pauline immediately after his arrival in Waco; it was connected with the room beyond by folding doors which were revealed by the flashing of Patsy's light to be drawn tightly together.

He released the button of his torch and was in the act of turning away to search for the stairs which would take him to the cellar of the house when he was again startled by the clicking noise he thought he had noticed once before, and this time it was so distinct that there was no mistaking it.

It was the noise of metal striking against metal, faintly and cautiously; a noise that would be reproduced exactly as he heard it if you grasp with one hand and lift from a table forks or spoons that were lying there.

At the same instant that he heard the clicking noise the glimmer of a light showed through a crack between the folding doors, and Patsy knew that some one was inside that next room beyond him; a room which was doubtless the dining-apartment of the house.

Patsy's first sensation upon being assured that the dining-room was occupied was one of dismay. It impressed him with the idea that Pauline Hastings had returned to her home and that she was not alone.

However, a second thought assured him that she could not have kept her engagement at the prison so far away and still be at her own home that same night, and for a moment he was puzzled what to do.

Then he smiled broadly, for it occurred to him that the noise was more than likely made by the guard he had suspected of being there, and who was possibly

indulging himself with the good things that were in Pauline's wine-closet.

Patsy approached the folding doors stealthily, for he had already seen that the way was clear between him and them. When he was near enough he got down to his knees and felt along the base of the door until his fingers encountered the crack that was between them, and into this slender opening he noiselessly thrust the edge of the jimmy, prying very tenderly with it in order that the more loosely fixed of the two doors would be the first to move.

It moved very gently and without a sound, so that he presently was enabled to see through the crack he had thus made, and he barely repressed an exclamation of amazement when he saw not ten feet away from him, and staring directly toward him at the crack in the door, a man whose every appearance was a counterpart of his own, from the roughness of his dress to the black hair and the half-mask covering his face.

"Another burglar!" he thought, with an exclamation point after it, but, of course, he uttered no sound.

Patsy felt very much inclined to laugh. It was a situation so novel and so little anticipated that it was ludicrous. Upon the table beside the burglar, as he leaned against it, a table-cloth had been unfolded, and in the center of this were heaped together the knives and forks and spoons and other silverware which the burglar had been getting together, and from which had proceeded the clicking noises that had first alarmed Patsy.

But the burglar had also been startled. That was evident from his attitude.

Why, Patsy did not know, because he was certain that he had made no noise. It may have been that the burglar was staring directly at the door when it moved beneath the pressure of Patsy's jimmy.

But, no matter what it was that had alarmed the midnight marauder, it was certain that he had been startled, and it was also certain that he had made up his mind what to do just at the instant when Patsy discovered him.

Even as the young detective saw the man through the crack in the door, the burglar darted forward with a quick catlike tread, seized the knobs of the folding doors, and threw them from him with a suddenness so unexpected that it discovered Patsy on his knees in the front room where he had been peering through at the real burglar.

You can imagine the situation better than I can describe it. The amazement of the real burglar was as great if not greater than Patsy's had been a moment before when he had discovered the real article that he was endeavoring to imitate.

The man who had been collecting the silverware let out a quick oath, and his right hand flew to a pocket where doubtless he carried an ever-ready weapon.

But Patsy was as quick as he.

Being upon his knees, he possessed an advantage on which the burglar did not calculate, and he used it without waiting for the attack of the other man, which was following so swiftly upon the incident already described; Patsy reached out quickly with his right hand, seized one trouser leg of the burglar and jerked it toward him with a suddenness which threw the man from his feet and brought him to the floor with an impact which not only jarred the house, but which brought a heavy grunt from the victim of it; and the revolver he had half-drawn from his pocket fell clattering to the floor without having been discharged.

Patsy propelled himself forward instantly, and the next moment had seized the burglar by the throat, rolled him over on his back, and was seated astride of him with his knees upon the burglar's arms, and he held the man in that helpless position without much effort.

This tableau lasted for perhaps half a minute when Patsy slightly loosened his grasp upon the man's throat, laughed in a low tone, for, notwithstanding the excitement of the moment and the solemn reason for his visit there, he was greatly amused by the circumstances.

The burglar—that is the real one—didn't regard it as a laughing matter at all. He was mad, and mad clear through.

"Let up, hang you!" he exclaimed, in a sharp undertone. "I reckon we're here on the same job, and I ain't no hog. I'll divvy."

CHAPTER IX.

A LIFER'S PLOT.

Patsy had no idea, however, of letting up just yet. He wished first to understand the situation better; but he secured the burglar's weapon, and then sprang quickly away from him, using his own revolver to cover the man while he said, not without a tinge of amusement in his voice:

"I'll hear your story first, mister, and you'd better get busy with it right quick."

The burglar grinned in reply, and then waved his hand significantly toward the heap of silverware on the table.

"That there is my story," he said. "I don't know who you are. I don't remember of having run across you before, but I reckon that you somehow got onto the same lay that I did, and finding out that the house was to be deserted, thought you'd help yourself. But I was here first. Don't forget that. And I've got more right to the swag than you have. However, as I said before, I ain't no hog, and I'm willin' to divvy up."

"Where is the owner of the house?" asked Patsy, as if he were entirely unaware of the fact.

The burglar grinned more broadly than before.

"I reckoned you didn't know all about that," he said. "You just found out that she had gone out of town, but you didn't know that she was to be gone several days, and, what's more, I don't believe you knowed that there was a big buck nigger left here to watch things during her absence, and that a pal o' mine is gettin' him gloriously drunk down-town so as to give me time to do this little job."

"Oh, that's the idea, is it?" said Patsy. "I didn't understand."

"Yes, that's the idea, and I call it a pretty good one, so now if you'll take that gun down I'll be obliged to you. The muzzle of it sort o' hurts my eyes."

"In just a minute I will," replied Patsy. "I want you to answer a few questions first."

"What for? Didn't I say I'd divvy up fair and square?"

"Yes; of course, you did, but that isn't what I want."

"Say, you don't want the hull thing, do yeh?"

"No, I don't want any part of it. I came here for something else."

The burglar uttered a low whistle of astonishment, and the grin faded slowly from his features.

"You're a queer kind of a gazabo," he muttered. "What's your lay? I confess I don't understand it."

Patsy pointed across the room toward the sideboard upon which an empty wine-bottle with a glass beside it, that had been used, were standing.

"That looks as if you had been into the cellar of the house," he said to the burglar.

"You bet I have. I went down there first. That's better stuff in them bottles than a fellow can git over the bars at Waco."

"Did you find anybody down there?" asked Patsy.

The burglar stared at him, and then said aloud:

"Say, pardner, have you gone plumb daffy? Who do you expect would be down there, anyhow? The president of the United States or Mr. Bryan?"

"I have reason to believe," said Patsy sharply, "that a man has been imprisoned in this house. I came here to find that man and not to crib the silverware or anything else. You are welcome to all of it and to all that the house contains if you help me to accomplish what I have come here to do."

Again the burglar whistled his astonishment, but this time it was in a different tone than before, and he raised one hand and scratched his head in a perplexed manner, still with his lips pursed up as if he were emitting a noiseless whistle.

"Well?" demanded Patsy impatiently.

"First off," said the man, "you ain't no real, genuine, dyed-in-the-wool burglar, are you?"

"No," said Patsy.

"And you did *not* come here to steal anything, did you?"

"No."

"Well, pardner, your makeup is the best ever. I took you for the real article—and then some. I sure did. But that there question of yours has put me wise to something that I didn't rightly savvy before you asked it. It has made me understand a few things that I didn't take the trouble to ask about before."

"Such as——" asked Patsy.

"Just hold hard a minute, pardner; I want to savvy if you're goin' to play this game on the level with me. If I tell you what I know, and I reckon that it's something you don't know, will you hold up your right hand and forget that you ever seen me?"

"I will," said Patsy. "I swear it solemnly."

"All right, mister, put your gun away and give me back mine, just to show that you mean what you say, and I'll play square with you just as long as you play square with me."

Without an instant's hesitation Patsy deposited his own gun in his pocket and returned the burglar's weapon to him; then he seated himself upon a chair at the table, leaned his elbow upon it, and waited.

"Gee!" said the burglar, "you're a cool cuss. I'd like to tie to you, mister, if you was in my line, but I can see as plain as daylight that you ain't, now that I've had a good look at you and savvied your voice and your manner of speaking."

"Go on with your story," said Patsy sharply.

"Well, until a few days ago I wore a number instead of a name; I was in a prison that isn't a thousand miles from where we are at this minute. Along-

side o' me was a lifer that I got to know pretty well, and we used to manage to talk considerable together when the guards wasn't too close. His name is King, and he was sent up for life for a little bit of gun-play he worked on an old pal of his ten or eleven years ago."

Patsy nodded comprehendingly.

"The lifer knew that my time was about up," continued the ex-convict, "and he had it all planned out with me that as soon as I was free I was to come here to this house and talk with a woman that lives here, whose name is Hastings. King told me that she had lots of dough, and that I'd be well paid for my trouble, and so I agreed to do his errand for him. The errand was simply to give her the outline of a certain plan he had formed for making his escape from the prison. Have you got that all down?"

"Yes," said Patsy.

"Well, mister, the plans didn't mature; leastwise not in the way the lifer figured. It was only two days before I was set free when King told me that I needn't do the errand he had asked of me, because he had already received a communication from the woman to the effect that she had planned for his escape and wouldn't need no help from me."

It was Patsy's turn to whistle his amazement.

"What do you know of their plans of escape?" he asked quickly.

"I don't know anything about them. I wasn't told anything except this: That the woman was to appear at the prison to-day—that is the day that has just passed and not the one we are entering upon now—and that King expected to be at liberty before midnight. How it was to be done, I don't know."

"What brought you to this place, then?" demanded the young detective.

"Mister, my profession brought me here. I remembered what King had told me about the woman here having plenty of dough. I remembered also that he said she wouldn't be at home about this time. I concluded that it would be a good opportunity for me to grubstake myself for another lay, and so here I am;" again he waved his hand significantly toward the silver heaped upon the table.

"What do you know about the prisoner I asked about?"

"Oh, yes, I'd plumb forgotten that."

"Well, what do you know about him?"

"I don't know anything about him except what the black nigger told my pal during the first part of their drinking-bout at the saloon, early in the night."

"What was that?"

"The nigger was getting drunk, all right, and he was sure getting it rapid. It made him talk a lot, and it made him brag. He got to talking about his strength and how much he could lift, and he sure is big medicine so far as that goes, but in bragging of it he told about carrying a man in his arms almost half a mile one night in the early part of the week. He said the man weighed a hundred and seventy or eighty pounds, and he carried him just as easy as he would a child. That was all plumb brag, of course, but it strikes me that maybe that was the gazabo you're looking for."

"What more do you know about it?" demanded Patsy.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I didn't pay much attention, but I gathered from what the nigger said that the man was a fellow that this here Miss Hastings wanted to get out of the way without killing him. Anyhow, he was a prisoner in her house, and the nigger carried him away in the night when he was drugged with morphine that had been shot into his arms or legs, and he was put into some kind of a conveyance which carted him away to a ranch that is situated down somewhere near the Rio Grande. Now, don't ask me any more questions about it, because I give you my word that's all I know."

"Just this one," said Patsy. "Do you know whether the man was badly hurt or not?"

"As I told you before, I don't know anything about it, but I reckon he wasn't much hurt, judging from what the nigger said."

"Do you know when it was?"

"I ain't sure about that even, but if I made a guess, I should say it was about last Monday night."

Patsy got up from his chair and said:

"You may go ahead with your business undisturbed by me, Mr. Burglar, and I will keep my word about forgetting that I ever saw you. I shall go up-stairs to have a look through the house, and I may glance into the cellar before I leave, but I won't disturb you, and you needn't disturb me."

CHAPTER X.

THE BURGLAR'S CLUE.

Patsy's search of the house did not reveal anything that was of interest to him, though he lost no unnecessary time in prosecuting it.

Within half an hour from the time he began talking with the burglar he was on his way back again through the city toward the hotel, where he arrived shortly after three in the morning, scarcely wiser than when he had left it, but determined that something must be done and done quickly in the search for Nick Carter.

So intent was he with his thoughts that he almost forgot to remove his mask and wig before entering the hotel, but fortunately he did so just in time, and so passed up the stairs toward Nick's room with a nod at the night-clerk who waved his hand at him with a cordiality which Patsy did not expect, and which, therefore, rather surprised him.

That surprise, however, was nothing to the one which awaited him at the room, for, as he opened the door and entered it, he was confronted by no less a person than Nick Carter himself, who had heard his approach and who was standing beside the table in the middle of the room awaiting him.

The detective's head and face were bruised and swollen, and he looked as if he had been through serious difficulties, as, indeed, he had. His clothing was almost in tatters, and he had just begun removing it when he heard Patsy's approach.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the assistant to his chief, "where did you come from, and how did you get here?"

"I scarcely know myself," replied Nick, proceeding with undressing himself. "If you'll turn on the water in the tub and get a bath ready, and then lay out some clean clothing for me, I'll tell you what has happened while I am getting some of this Texas mud and dust off of me."

"You see," continued the detective, in a moment, "I was assaulted the night I left the train after my interview with King in prison."

"Hold on a minute!" said Patsy. "King has escaped."

"What do you say? Escaped!" cried the detective.

"Well, I don't know that he has actually escaped, but I do know that there was a plot to set him at liberty this very night, and I have followed the fortunes of Pauline Hastings long enough to discover that she generally carries out what she undertakes to do."

"Tell me about that first," said Nick. "My story will keep," and so Patsy related almost word for word what the burglar had told him.

"My story is a short one," said Nick. "You don't need very many of the particulars. I was rapped on the head and very generously punched with brass knuckles when I least expected it, and, before I had an opportunity to defend myself, I was chucked into a hack and carted away, and while that was being done, I was bound and gagged and blindfolded. Presently I was carried into a house and chucked upon the floor as if I were a bag of meal, and not very long after that I was actually sewed up in a bag that was made of burlap.

"I was entirely helpless, Patsy, but while I laid there waiting for what they were going to do next, I heard the voice of Pauline Hastings in the next room giving directions.

"Presently I was picked up as if I were a child and slung across the shoulder of a big nigger. My sense of smell told me that, and while the fellow held me in that position, two hypodermic injections, supposedly of morphine, were shot into my leg.

"It wasn't long after that when I lost consciousness, and the next thing that I knew I was lying in a swampy place gazing up into the faces of three cowboys, who were grinning down upon me. Two of them were in their saddles, the other had dismounted and ripped open the bag in which I had been sewed.

"That is about all, Patsy. They took me to their headquarters, and I started back for Waco just as soon as I had strength enough to sit on a horse. I arrived in this room less than fifteen minutes before you did."

"But I don't understand it even yet," said Patsy.

"It's easy enough to understand, lad. I was waylaid and knocked down by order of Pauline Hastings. She didn't want to have me murdered and put out of the way definitely, within the limits of Waco, for the reason that there would be some difficulty in getting rid of my body, and so she probably hired the nigger to carry me off somewhere and do it for her. But he evidently got tired of the job and threw it up."

"No," said Patsy, "that isn't the idea. You were to be taken to a ranch somewhere down near the Rio Grande."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Nick. "The Rio Grande River is almost three hundred miles from here."

"I don't care if it's three thousand," insisted Patsy. "That's the story I heard, and that is what I think was attempted, but the nigger, instead of carrying out his orders, dumped you bag and all into the swamp, believing that you would die there."

"Anyhow," exclaimed the detective, leaping from the bath-tub and beginning to rub himself vigorously. "I'm alive and well yet, and with a few hours sleep will be as much on earth as ever; and now Patsy, while I'm getting a little rest that I must have, you have got to keep busy."

"I'm willing."

"Go down-stairs and call up the prison over the telephone. Make them wake up the warden and get him on the phone, then find out what has happened, and if King hasn't already made his escape, inform the warden of everything you have heard."

Patsy was absent less than half an hour, but when he returned, Nick Carter was sleeping soundly.

Still the assistant thought his information sufficiently important to wake his chief, and he did so.

"I thought I ought to wake you," he said, "because there are trains going out from the station here in three different directions inside of two hours, and it seems to me that we ought to take one of them."

"Why?" asked Nick. "Tell me what you have found out."

"King made good his escape from the prison at noon yesterday. He was gone more than an hour before his absence was discovered. Every place where he might be hidden has been searched thoroughly, and no trace of him has been found. Pauline Hastings was known to be there when he made his escape. She has also disappeared. The telegraph and telephone wires have been kept busy, but the warden is clear up a tree about it all. He confessed to me over the telephone that he hadn't an idea in which direction to search to get a trace of the escaped lifer."

"Well," said Nick, "what did you mean a minute ago about your remark about the trains that go from here in three different directions?"

"What I meant was this," replied Patsy. "We have only one clue to suggest the direction that King might have taken in making his escape. I don't care a rap about King, and, of course, you don't, but wherever he is, there we'll find Pauline."

"That goes without saying," said Nick.

"Well, we've got one clue to where they are going, chief."

"You mean your talk with the burglar?"

"Yes."

"I shouldn't wonder if you're right, Patsy."

"I think so, chief. The very obscurity of it and the roundabout method by which it reached me makes me think it is worth following."

"It isn't much of a clue when you come to sift it down, Patsy. The Rio Grande is a pretty long river, and it flows all the way past Texas."

"I have thought about that, too," said Patsy.

"What have you thought about it?"

"The burglar told me that you were to be sent to a ranch somewhere down near the Rio Grande. Those are very nearly his exact words."

"Yes, well?"

"I haven't forgotten, chief, nor have you, that the only property Pauline Hastings owns, came to her as a gift from John Y. Ransom."

"That's as sure as you live, Patsy."

"Very well, it is more than likely, isn't it, that in addition to giving her an annuity he might also have given her a small ranch somewhere as a home to which she could go, and where she could raise cattle of her own?"

"It is not unlikely."

"Then let's try to think of some man here in Waco who was associated with John Y. Ransom in business; some man who would know about the properties he was interested in and the ranches he owned. If we can find such a man as that, Nick, and he can tell us about such a ranch that is located near the Rio Grande, our clue will be transformed from a poor one into a good one."

"Patsy," exclaimed the detective, starting forward and now fully dressed, "you have hit the nail on the head. That night-clerk down-stairs looks as if he has been here for a long time. We will ask him for the sort of man you describe."

"I don't know," said the night-clerk, when he was questioned by the detective, "unless old Bill Reeves might tell you what you want to know. He used to be a side partner with Jack Ransom in their Ranger days, and was afterward interested with him in business;" and he wrote down Mr. Reeves' address on a slip of paper.

Fortunately for the interests of Nick Carter and his assistant, Mr. Reeves proved to be an "early bird," and was standing at his front gate watching the sun rising when Nick and Patsy approached him.

"You knew Jack Ransom well, Mr. Reeves?" asked the detective, coming at once to the point.

"Well, I reckon so," was the slowly drawled reply. "We was kids together, we punched cows together, we rode alongside of each other in the Rangers, and when we quit 'em, we went into business together. I reckon I was about the closest friend he ever had, and I ain't never rightly sized up why he should have died so sudden of apoplexy."

"Mr. Reeves, do you know, or have you ever heard, about a ranch that he owned that was located on or quite near to the Rio Grande River?"

"Sure thing, Mr. Carter, you said that was your name, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"There's just such a ranch as you described down in Crockett County. It ain't very far from Fort Lancaster; but he didn't own that ranch when he died. He transferred it first to me, and then I, for the consideration of one dollar and other valuable considerations which doesn't appear, although it was recited in the deed, made it over to Miss Pauline Hastings."

"Good!" exclaimed Nick, slapping the surprised rancher heartily on the shoulder. "That is just what I wanted to know. Now, tell me, if you please, the quickest way to get to that ranch from here."

"Well, there are two ways, but I reckon the quickest would be for you to take the train to San Angelo in Tom Green County. That will give you a train-ride of about two hundred miles or thereabouts, and a horseback-ride of about thirty miles after it. From San Angelo you want to bear about due southwest, and you'll find the ranch located about midway between Hembrie and Fort Lancaster."

"Thank you," said Nick. "Come on, Patsy," and they started at a rapid walk toward the station.

CHAPTER XI.

PAULINE AND THE LIFER.

Nick Carter and Patsy arrived at San Angelo in due time, and it is no reflection upon either of them to admit that they slept during the greater part of the journey.

Two hundred miles in Texas is not made so quickly on a railroad as it is farther north and east, and it was actually evening when they left the train at the station and looked about them for a friendly face in the hope of being directed to some place where they could obtain horses for the rest of their journey.

Both had by this time become imbued with the idea that they were actually upon the track of Pauline Hastings and the escaped life-convict, for Nick argued that it was doubtful if it were generally known that she was the owner of the ranch in question, since Ransom had taken the trouble to convey it to a third party before it was reconveyed to her.

The friendly face for which they searched beamed upon them from six feet five of stalwart manhood in the shape of an overgrown cowboy, who, notwithstanding his gigantic stature, was, nevertheless, a youth in years.

"Sure!" he exclaimed, in reply to a question. "It will be easy enough to find horses for you, but it won't be so dead easy to get saddles."

"We will buy them and pay good prices," retorted Nick, and, taking money from his pocket, he showed the young man that he was prepared to be as good as his word.

Within an hour after that, notwithstanding that darkness had already fallen, they rode out of San Angelo together with the youthful but gigantic cowboy, who had been engaged as guide.

According to him they had about thirty-five miles to go, and should accomplish the distance before daylight, notwithstanding the fact that part of it was across a rough country where the traveling was anything but good.

The boy whose name was Simms knew the Double-X Ranch, as it was called, and had once visited it, but he had not heard that its present owner had ever been there, although he knew that it was now owned by a woman.

When Nick questioned him if other travelers had come there seeking the same ranch, he knew nothing about such an event, and, for that reason, as they rode onward, Nick and Patsy became momentarily less and less certain of the ultimate success of their venture.

Crockett County is very sparsely settled, indeed, as were the other sections of the country through which the travelers passed on their ride; but the night was calm and beautiful, and well-lighted by a moon, so that they experienced no difficulty in riding forward at a rapid pace, although as the night deepened Nick directed them to check their horses and to go more slowly, as he did not wish to arrive at the ranch before daylight.

It had suddenly occurred to him that he had without much thought undertaken rather a big contract, for if the ranch were stocked with cattle, and, therefore, provided with an outfit of cowboys, they would rally around their young mistress like warriors around their queen, and Nick Carter and his assistant would have taken their long ride for nothing.

"How much of an outfit is there at the Double-X Ranch, Simms?" Nick asked of their guide, when the latter told them that another half-hour's ride would bring them to the ranch.

"I reckon there ain't any at all to speak of, mister," was the reply. "Most of the stock was sold off from that ranch a few months ago, and the last I knew about it was that there was only a greaser overseer left there."

"So much the better," said the detective. "Does the ranch border upon the river?"

"Yes, sir, it runs right along the edge of it for two or three miles. It's a pretty big ranch of itself, and it commands enough grazing country around it to feed twenty thousand head of stock."

They rode forward in silence after that until the adobe houses of the ranch were in sight, and they came into view of them just as daylight began to show itself.

Nick, who had now taken the lead, quickened the pace of his horse instead of slackening it, and in this manner they rode directly to the corral behind the bunk-house where they dismounted, for the moment out of view from any one save, perhaps, possible occupants of the bunk-house which appeared to be deserted.

A glimpse into the corral discovered four horses there, and the young cowboy pointing toward them, remarked solemnly:

"You can take it from me that you won't find no more than four persons located here right now. Down in this country you can always count a horse to a man and oftener two horses to a man, but three of those animals there show recent saddle-marks, so I figger it out that you'll find three persons beside the old greaser inside the house."

Nick directed Patsy and Simms to hold the horses while he went forward alone, charging them to rush the house at any sign of trouble, but to hang back and keep out of sight until he called them unless something happened. As he reached the bunk-house he peered into it, noting that it was quite deserted; and then he passed the stretch between it and the ranch-house itself.

He approached it at the rear, and upon pushing open the door, which was unlatched as well as unlocked, found himself in the kitchen of the house.

He stood there for a moment looking around him, then crossed to another door which he opened and passed through, entering upon the dining-room of the building, and here he paused abruptly, interrupted in his advance by the sound of voices raised in angry altercation.

While he hesitated the voices came nearer as if the persons who were quarreling were approaching him, and he withdrew into the kitchen again, allowing the door between the two rooms to swing open, and, stepping behind it to secure a place of concealment.

The moment he did so, Pauline Hastings entered the dining-room by another door and was closely followed by Basil King, whom Nick had last seen in prison-garb and with cropped head, but who was now dressed like a gentleman, even to a watch-fob, which dangled from his waistcoat pocket and a sumptuous wig of curly sandy hair.

But the piercing eyes, massive jaws, and florid face were all in evidence unchanged, although King's usually placid smile had given place to a frown of angry impatience.

"You can do as you like, Pauline," he was saying, as he followed her into the room and slammed the door behind him. "As for me, I'm going across the river into Mexico, and when I get there I'm going to keep right on. Uncle Sam's territory is a little too hot for me just now, and that warden, whom you fooled so nicely, won't be letting the grass grow under his feet in his effort to find me."

"Where is that, greaser?" exclaimed Pauline impetuantly. "Did you call him, Basil?"

"I sure did, and he answered me. He has probably gone out to the corral."

"I'll go after him myself," said Pauline. "He's probably in the other part of the house. He's the slowest mortal that ever lived."

She turned about and left the room by the same door she had entered, and King, with a broad grin on his face, followed after her, again banging the door after he passed through it, and thus Nick Carter was again left alone at the very instant when he had intended to step forward and place King and Pauline under arrest.

He could hear them noisily passing through other rooms of the house, and after a moment of further hesitation he followed them.

The building, unlike most others of such a character in that part of the country, was two stories in height, and when he passed through the door, where Pauline and King disappeared, he could hear their voices still engaged in excited conversation proceeding from the floor above him, and, passing through still another door, he came to a flight of stairs which he ascended rapidly. He regretted now that he had not brought Patsy to the house with him, inasmuch as the assistant's presence would have simplified matters, and once he paused, thinking that perhaps after all it would be better, since his presence was not suspected there, to return for Patsy and Simms, and to have them with him when he made the arrest.

There were no indications that King and Pauline meant to leave the premises at once, and, besides, he had himself seen the horses in the corral where the young cowboy and Patsy were on guard, and so he turned about and retraced his steps rapidly, passing again to the kitchen and into the open, and then with a quick run covering the distance to the bunk-house behind which he dodged as quickly as possible, hoping that he had not been seen.

In a low tone he called Patsy and Simms to him, and they waited a moment there behind the bunk-house while the detective directed them what to do.

Simms was to remain in the saddle near the kitchen door on guard against the escape of any one from the ranch-house, and to intercept them if they sought to reach the corral and their horses.

Nick and Patsy were to enter the house to make the arrest.

Leaving their horses for Simms to lead forward slowly toward the kitchen door, Nick and Patsy dashed ahead at a run across the space that separated them from the house; but even as they started a shot rang out from one of the upper windows and Nick Carter both heard and felt the whisper of a bullet as it tore through the air past him much too close for comfort.

He knew then that their presence had been discovered, but he did not slacken his pace, and neither did Patsy.

A second bullet lifted Patsy's hat from his head as if a hand had done the deed, and a third one tore away the heel of one of Nick Carter's shoes; but that was all.

They dashed through the door into the kitchen, and

to the one which communicated with the dining-room.

It was barred and locked against them on the other side, and Nick Carter wasted a fruitless minute in trying to force it open.

Patsy, in the meanwhile, had found a second door which he succeeded in opening, but beyond them in the next room they were again brought to a stop by another door barred and locked as the first one had been.

And while they toiled at this one the sudden clatter of horses' hoofs from in front of the house, opposite where they had left Simms, warned them that the fugitives were again making their escape.

There was nothing for Nick Carter and Patsy to do then but to return by the way they came, and they ran from the house swiftly to find that Simms was shouting to them at the top of his lungs, while he pointed excitedly past one corner of the house from beyond which the sound of galloping horses could be heard.

CHAPTER XII.

SWIMMING THE RIO GRANDE.

The distance from the ranch-house to the Rio Grande was about a mile, and as Nick Carter and his two companions charged after the escaping fugitives they understood how it was that Pauline and King had been enabled to make their escape.

The four horses they had seen in the corral were the tired ones that had been ridden to the ranch by Basil King and Pauline; the three horses upon which they, accompanied by the Mexican, were now making their escape, were other animals that belonged at the ranch, and which had been taken from the corral very early in the morning, before daylight, to be used by the fugitives in crossing the river into Mexico.

Had Nick Carter ridden forward a little faster and so arrived at the ranch half an hour earlier than he did, he would have discovered the Mexican making ready for the further journey of his mistress.

It so happened that when the detective had nearly reached the ranch-house and entered it by the kitchen door, the three fresh horses were already saddled and prepared for their journey and were standing in front of the house, where the detective and his friends did not and could not see them.

Notwithstanding the closeness of the pursuit, the delay which had been occasioned by Nick's and Patsy's efforts to break down the doors inside the house had given the fugitives a fairly good start, and the result was that when the detective and his two friends urged their horses forward in the chase, King and Pauline and the Mexican were already forty or fifty rods in advance of them.

They were galloping like mad, too, directly toward the river, and Simms, who was a little bit behind where Nick and Patsy rode almost abreast, called out that there was a ford with quicksand on either side of it.

The Rio Grande River is known as one of the most dangerous and eccentric currents in the world. There are quicksands everywhere along its winding shores. Fords which are good one season are useless the next, and the current of the river shifts and changes from year to year in a most remarkable way.

"I can break the leg of one of them horses with a bullet from my gun, if you say so," Simms called out to them as they dashed forward, but Nick ordered him not to fire.

He felt that he would rather let Pauline Hastings escape him entirely than that she should be wounded by a bullet from the gun of any man in his employ.

He could make war upon a woman when that woman had committed two deliberate murders, as he was firmly convinced that Pauline had done, but he could not carry it to the extent of shooting at her with firearms, no matter what the circumstances might be.

The fugitives were, however, not so kindly disposed.

Time and again as they rode forward toward the river, King and the Mexican half-turned in their saddles and pumped their guns at the pursuing detectives.

Simm's horse got a bullet between the eyes and plunged forward dead before it had struck the ground, throwing the gigantic cowboy on his head and shoulders in the sandy dust.

A bullet tore through Nick Carter's hat, singeing

the skin of his scalp as it passed, and another splintered Patsy's saddle-horn.

A little farther on, the horse that Patsy was riding reeled and staggered and then fell, unhorsing him, but he leaped to his feet and kept up the pursuit on foot, while Nick Carter dashed along never once thinking of relinquishing the chase.

Every reader of the Nick Carter histories knows what a perfect marksman the detective is, and will therefore understand how easily he might have used his skill to at least have crippled the horses that the fugitives were riding.

But Nick Carter did not think it necessary to cause needless suffering, even to a dumb animal.

He could see ahead of them the surface of the Rio Grande River glistening in the morning sun, and he believed that he might overtake the fugitives before they could succeed in crossing it; at least, it would not be necessary for him to resort to heroic measures until there were no other means of accomplishing what he sought to do.

Once he glanced back over his shoulder and smiled to see Patsy running forward on foot as eager in the chase as ever, but being left farther behind with every instant; beyond him the long legs and arms of Simms, the cowboy, were working like windmills, and he was overhauling Patsy with every step he took.

The Mexican rode the fleetest of the three horses of the fugitives, and he was, therefore, first to reach the river into which he dashed without so much as a glance backward.

Pauline was directly behind him, and she followed without any apparent hesitation, while Basil King, the escaped lifer, turned in his saddle at the edge of the river and calmly and deliberately leveled his weapon at Nick Carter.

"Go back!" he shouted, "or I will shoot to kill."

The detective made no answer, but as he saw the puff of smoke issue from the muzzle of King's revolver he ducked forward upon his horse's neck and so escaped the bullet which might otherwise have killed him; when he raised his head again, King had taken to the river after the others.

There are two ways of swimming a river with a horse, and this was a case of swimming instead of fording it, as Nick Carter quickly discovered.

One of the ways referred to, and the poorest one under any circumstances, is to remain in the saddle and permit the horse to bear all of the additional weight of its rider; the other one is to slip from the horse's back, to seize it by the end of the tail, and to let the horse tow its rider through the water.

This last method was adopted by the Mexican, and the horse he bestrode was a wonderful swimmer as well as a fleet runner; by the time King entered the river the Mexican was far out in the water, being swiftly towed toward the opposite bank.

King, formerly an outlaw in that very country as we know, was an old timer at this sort of business, and knew every trick of it. He lost no time in following the example of the Mexican by slipping from the saddle and grasping the tail of his horse, and so it was that, although he was the last one to enter the water, he speedily overtook and passed Pauline, shouting to her as he did so, in words that the detective could hear plainly, to get out of the saddle and let the horse tow her across.

She was either afraid to follow this advice or she did not know quite how to do it, for she paid no attention to his repeated calls, with the result that she was presently left far behind while the two men, who accompanied her, were apparently making good their escape.

When Nick Carter dashed into the river she was not more than twelve or fifteen rods ahead of him. He, too, left the saddle and seized upon the tail of his horse, and the animal proved to be almost as good a swimmer as the horse of the Mexican, which was already approaching the opposite bank and would soon be upon it.

Regarding the Mexican, however, Nick Carter gave no thought or heed. He hoped, indeed, that the man would escape, as he would only be a trouble and an unnecessary encumbrance if he were captured. It were quite necessary, however, that Basil King should not be permitted to reach the other side, and so come to land upon Mexican territory, and, therefore, much against his will, Nick Carter raised his revolver the

last thing before he entered the water and shot the lifer's horse through the brain, killing it instantly.

"Turn back, King, and give yourself up, or the next bullet will be for you," he called out; and then, without waiting to observe the result of this order, he sent his horse into the water.

A horse, when swimming, will always select its own spot for landing on an opposite bank, and it is impossible to guide them elsewhere, once their resolve is taken in this respect. It is rarely, too, that one horse will follow directly after another one at such a time. Each seems to act without regard to any other, and to depend entirely upon its own resources for getting safely out of the water.

On this occasion, however, Nick Carter's horse chose to follow directly after the one which Pauline rode, and which had turned down the stream so that it followed for some distance along the middle of the river course, and, as may be expected, Nick Carter's horse, unimpeded by the weight of a rider on its back, gained swiftly upon Pauline, and by the time the other one had turned again toward the bank, he was within twenty feet of her and still gaining, so that when at last Pauline's horse did struggle out of the water and up the sloping bank, Nick Carter was almost within reach of her.

She turned a pale face toward him, and then, as he leaped from the water and essayed to pull himself again into the saddle, she whipped a pistol from the folds of her dress and snapped it in Nick Carter's face with the muzzle of it not five feet from him.

But either the cartridge was bad or the water had rendered it useless, for it failed to explode, and the next instant Nick Carter sprang forward, threw his arms around her, and lifted her from the saddle just as the horse she had been riding, and which had borne her so safely across the Rio Grande River, leaped away from beneath her and dashed onward riderless.

For a moment she struggled in his grasp, and then just as any other woman might have done under the circumstances, she quietly fainted away in his arms.

Holding her so that she would not fall to the ground, Nick looked out across the river toward the spot where he had last seen Basil King struggling alone in the water, from the spot where his horse had disappeared from view.

It was a strange scene that met his gaze then for the two men, King and Patsy, were facing each other with only their heads and shoulders out of the water, for they were evidently at a point where a sandbar had formed in the middle of the river. But Patsy held a pistol in one hand, while with the other he pointed suggestively toward the Texas shore, and Nick Carter laughed aloud as he comprehended the situation.

As he did so, Pauline opened her eyes and tried to struggle out of his grasp, and when he resisted her efforts she exclaimed:

"You can't arrest me here, Nick Carter. I am on Mexican soil."

"All right," said Nick, still laughing, "I'll carry you across the river and arrest you on the other side."

She smiled at this and looked at him strangely, as if she did not more than half-comprehend what she was saying, and she murmured in a tone so low that he scarcely heard her:

"I think I am glad of it, after all. I am sorry that I gave the fox-glove poison to Irma."

"So you did poison her, did you?" asked Nick, as softly as she had spoken.

"Yes," she replied, "and I am sorry;" and then she lapsed again into unconsciousness.

* * * * * * *

This is the end of the story.

The ford across the river to which Simms had referred in his hurried statement to Nick Carter at the beginning of the chase, was located half a mile farther down, and by it Nick presently returned to the Texas shore with his captive, whom he ultimately delivered to the proper authorities after having made his charge against her, together with an affidavit covering the evidence he had obtained and the confession he had heard from her.

Basil King was returned in due time to the warden of the prison to finish out his life sentence.

THE END.

The next number, 624, will contain "A Woman of Plots; or, Nick Carter's Cleverest Countermove."

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HOW WE CAUGHT OUR ORANG-OUTANG.

By CAPTAIN LINDSAY ANDERSON.

While on a cruise in the far East several years ago, I had occasion to visit the dominions of the Sultan of Brunei, on the northwest coast of the island of Borneo, not far from the island of Labuan. One of my fellow voyagers, Donald Ross, was a great sportsman, and I verily believe he would rather have spent his life in the forest than among the most luxurious surroundings of our modern civilization.

After Donald and I had succeeded in ingratiating ourselves with the sultan and his ministers by a prodigal bestowal of many articles of more or less value, which were prized by these semicivilized individuals and their many spouses and other retainers, we received permission to hunt and shoot over any portion of the sultan's dominions at our own risk of capture, either by wild animals or uncivilized Dyaks on the mountains, who had a strong cannibalistic propensity, especially for orang-puti—white men.

Besides granting us permission to hunt over his territories, the sultan presented us with a gobang—canoe—capable of carrying four adults, if it were necessary, and provided with the requisite number of paddles for its propulsion.

On the morning following our visit to the palace and the receipt of the gobang, my chum and I started off up the river by our two selves on an exploration-trip, taking nothing more death-dealing with us than a couple of double-barreled fowling-pieces and a moderate supply of ammunition.

After we had paddled up the river some five or six miles beyond the town of Brunei, we came to a pretty large creek, which branched off to the left, and as there seemed to be less current in it, we ran our canoe in its direction, and paddled on.

We had scarcely gone more than half a mile up the creek before we were astonished to hear behind us—we were both paddling, one at each end of the canoe—a great sputtering and splashing in the water.

"Look at that, Lindsay!" exclaimed Donald, as we both cast our eyes behind to see what was the matter, and discovered that we had disturbed a brood of alligators, who were rushing after us with open jaws, some of them only a couple of yards away.

Without making any reply to Donald, I threw down my paddle, and having got hold of my gun, I let drive both barrels down the capacious jaws of the nearest monster.

"We are in for it now!" again exclaimed Donald, as I threw my unloaded gun down in the bottom of the canoe and quickly regained my paddle, for the effect of my shot had only quickened the speed of our pursuers, without doing the slightest injury to the alligator.

"Give way, Donald; paddle, if you ever paddled!" I shouted, as I drove my paddle into the water with a rapidity I could scarcely have been capable of under less interesting circumstances.

"Is that beggar you shot at making for us?" asked Donald, without looking round to delay his paddling exertions.

"I could hit him with my paddle," I replied. "Stand by to jump out," I added, as the splash of the monster's flippers threw some water on my back, "and make for the first tree. Here goes!" and as I concluded, I gave the canoe a sheer into the muddy bank; and in much less time than I can write it, Donald and I were out of the canoe, scrambling up the slippery bank in the direction of the nearest tree.

We were both well accustomed to tree-climbing, but I don't think we ever climbed a tree with so much rapidity as we did that morning. After we had succeeded in reaching a tolerably safe position among the branches of the tree, some fifteen or twenty feet from the ground, we drew our breath for a minute and surveyed our position.

The enraged alligator had reached the base of our tree, and was vainly endeavoring to ascend in pursuit; but all its ungainly attempts were of no avail, on account of the sliminess of the mud on its scaly body.

"We are properly treed this time, Lindsay," said Donald, as we sat and watched the unsuccessful efforts of the monster to climb after us.

"Yes, we are up a tree now, and no mistake about it," I ejaculated, as I wiped the perspiration from my face. "And how we are to get back to the canoe is a puzzler."

"Oh, the beggar will tire of the game and go back to the water," remarked my companion, as the alligator desisted from his upward struggles. "He is tired out now; look at that," added Donald, as the monster glanced round toward the farther recess of the forest, apparently cogitating how best to make prisoners of us, and cut off retreat in that direction; such at any rate was the thought that possessed my mind as I watched the shifting glances of the monster.

Our speculations as to the intentions of our enemy were soon set at rest, for all in a moment our ears were assailed by the screeching and roaring of a host of infuriated animals, who came rushing through the forest in our direction, their demoniacal yells adding a new and terrible dilemma to our very precarious position.

As Donald and I watched in breathless silence for the coming of the fast-approaching animals, and prepared ourselves for what might occur by hiding our bodies among the foliage of our tree, and possessing ourselves of tolerably large clubs, quickly broken off from the tree, we were astonished to see the alligator beat a hasty retreat toward the creek; and as it rushed off it was pursued to the water's edge by a lot of shaggy-looking animals, almost in the form and shape of human beings.

"Orang-outangs, as I live!" exclaimed Donald, in a whisper, as we watched the mob of infuriated animals chasing the alligator back to his native element.

"It's all up with us if they spot us," I whispered back to my companion, scarcely daring to breathe in case the animals should discover us, for they looked wild and formidable antagonists to tackle with a three-foot branch of a tree for a club.

"They're off down the stream after the alligator," exclaimed Donald, as he sprang up from his reclining position on the branch. "Now is our chance; come on," and as Donald finished speaking he dropped from his perch, and you may be sure I was close behind him.

In less than a minute we regained our canoe, and we never stopped to draw breath until we were out on the river again, although the orang-outangs pelted us with pieces of wood and other missiles as we ran the gantlet past them.

Where the alligator took itself off to we never paused to speculate on, but made the best of our way back to our craft, not at all displeased with our morning's adventure, because it had paved the way for the fulfilment of one of our principal objects in desiring to hunt over the sultan's dominions.

When we sailed from Singapore, one of the most urgent requests made to us by the owner of our yacht was to bring him a live specimen of the orang-outang if at all possible; and now that we had located the whereabouts of these human-looking animals, we were well satisfied with our first morning's work.

After breakfast that same morning, we visited the palace, and after making a very valuable present to the grand vizier, we were granted an interview with that important individual, who promised us the assistance of several of his warriors to effect the capture of the animal we so much desired.

The following morning we were up and away to the rendezvous of the vizier's warriors by four o'clock, accompanied by our carpenter and several of our Malay crew. The carpenter had a couple of sharp axes with him, as requested by the chief warrior, and the Malays had with them a coil of small rope.

Day was just breaking when we arrived at the place of meeting, which was the entrance to the creek up which we had gone on the previous morning.

The warriors were there in waiting when we arrived, all armed with heavy cudgels, and several of them carried huge gongs in their hands, warranted to produce a most loud and discordant noise. As soon as we landed in the forest, the carpenter, under the directions of the warriors, cut down a quantity of branches from the surrounding trees, and fashioned them into stakes; while the rest of us made ourselves good serviceable clubs, after the fashion of those carried by the warriors.

When all our implements were ready, we moved off into the forest till we came to a large clearing, about half a mile from the creek; and there we found a large herd of orang-outangs, lying about on the grass, as if they were asleep.

When the noise of our approach awoke the orang-outangs, they all sprang upon their hinder feet, and after gazing in our direction for a second, they made a rush at us, yelling at the same time in a most hideous and appalling manner.

They had no sooner started in our direction than the warriors set up a still more hideous noise by the beating of their gongs, which had the effect of bringing the animals to a halt; and as our warriors began to move forward, the orang-outangs turned and fled to the farther end of the clearing.

The chief warrior, having posted his men within fifty yards of where we were left standing with the stakes, returned, and, with our assistance, began the work of building the trap.

Twenty-four stakes were driven into the ground in the form of a circle, the diameter of which at the base was about four feet. The top ends of the stakes were then drawn together, also in circular form, till their diameter was about fifteen inches. The whole erection was then securely interlaced and tied together with rope; after which an inverted machine of conical form, made of sharp-pointed bamboos, was inserted with the points downward, the base of this machine being secured to the top end of the stakes, the downward sharp-pointed ends being close together, but capable of being opened by the least pressure, and then springing back to their close position.

After the trap was all ready, the chief warrior put a large sago pulp into the trap, and then signaled to his gong-beaters to cease their noise and make a backward move.

As our warriors retreated, the orang-outangs came cautiously forward, howling and gnashing their teeth, as if they would like to annihilate us.

At the request of the chief warrior, we all fell back to the extent of a hundred yards or thereabouts from the trap, and then came to a halt, to watch the proceedings of the animals. As soon as they scented the sago pulp they surrounded the trap and endeavored to reach it with their hands; but as it was placed right in the center, they failed to reach the tempting bait.

Some of them, in their rage, endeavored to tear away a stake to get at it; but although the lot of them might have pulled the whole erection down, they had no sense of combined action in their brains to attain that object.

At length, after some five or six minutes had elapsed, one more eager than his fellows got perched upon the top, then another followed him; and as they gazed down at the tempting morsel they tried to reach it from the coign of vantage, but they tried in vain; it was too far off.

The two animals perched on the top, much to our amusement, began to quarrel with each other for more space in which to make their attempts; and one of them, in his eagerness or desperation, made a dive into the trap head foremost and secured the bait, but, alas for him; he also lost his liberty.

The chief warrior, upon seeing the orang-outang fairly caged, ordered his men to advance again, with their gongs beating. And this time they drove the animals right back to the forest, so that they should not witness the further operation of securing the prisoner—the Malays having some superstitious leaning toward the orang-outangs, as they have to the alligators.

"We have got him right enough," said Donald to me, as we approached the trap; "but how are we to secure him, for he does look a rather ferocious specimen to handle?"

"I shouldn't like to have a wrestle with him," I exclaimed, as the animal leaped about in his cage, and showed his tusk-like teeth, while the head warrior was discussing with one of his men the best means of securing him.

"There wouldn't be much wrestling about it, I'm thinking," remarked Donald; "one embrace, and then he would rend his victim in pieces in no time."

After the warrior and his friend had concluded their consultation, they approached Donald and me and explained two methods whereby our captive could be secured.

The first was to chain him to a tree and leave him to be starved out, which would drive the herd away from that forest altogether; and the other method was to smoke him at once into insensibility, and take him away with us—the last method requiring a backsheesh of a dollar a man to the warriors for their superior knowledge of the surroundings.

As neither Donald nor I could secure the animal, I promised the required dollars as soon as the animal was caged and on board; and the bargain was struck on the spot, with the promise that the grand vizier should not be made acquainted with their divulgement of the vegetable secret.

The two warriors then went some distance into the wood, and after a few minutes' absence they returned with a large armful apiece of dried-looking leaves, which very much resembled tobacco-leaf in its virgin state.

In a few minutes they had the cage surrounded with the leaves, after which they set fire to it, and the wild man of the woods was hidden from our view by a dense volume of suffocating smoke.

Some wild and piteous howling came from the orang at first, but he was not many minutes in succumbing to his somewhat disagreeably enforced drowsiness. After the warriors considered the animal was sufficiently insensible and harmless, the stakes were quickly pulled out of the ground, and the trap entirely demolished. The animal was then tied hands and feet, and his mouth securely gagged. A litter was made, on which he was placed, to be carried down to the warriors' large gobang.

As soon as the orang-outang was placed in the gobang, and we were in readiness to depart, the chief warrior gave a loud call to his men in the forest, and they returned to the creek, with their faces all the time to the advancing orang-outangs, who followed them down to the very edge of the water, although they were so afraid of the noise of the gongs that they dared not attack the warriors during their retreat.

We had a large sheep-pen on board the yacht, which made a very nice habitation for the captive, and as soon as he was placed within it, the warriors were paid for their assistance in a handsome manner.

Jacko, as we named the orang-outang, was safely delivered by me to the owner at Singapore, and the wild man of the woods eventually found a home in the zoological gardens.

WHAT WIND CAN DO.

During the latest volcanic eruption in the Hawaiian Islands the smoke rose to a height of between five and six miles, and then drifted away to the northeast. At a distance of 600 miles it settled on the surface of the sea, and was then carried back by the northeast wind to its place of origin, where it arrived a fortnight after its original departure, and covered the entire group of islands with its heavy pall.

Not long ago a steamer, on her way from Asia to England, had entered the Galita Channel between the island of that name and the coast of Tunis, when a fine dust began to darken the air, and soon afterward to fall on deck. Some of this dust was collected, and subjected to chemical analysis in Europe. Its constituents proved that it had been carried high in the air from the Sahara Desert, and had finally dropped into the Mediterranean.

More extraordinary still was a dust-shower that fell in Hungary some years ago. Analysis showed that this dust was identical with the sediment of the Nile. The dust was believed to have been brought by the wind all the way from Egypt—a remarkably long journey for a shower of that description to accomplish.

It must have been a high wind, indeed, that brought a shower of the seed of a peculiar kind of wheat on one occasion to the villagers in a place on the southern coast of Spain. The wheat fell like rain. There were so many witnesses of the occurrence that it was impossible to doubt that it had appeared; but for some months it could not be accounted for.

Then came the other side of the story. It was learned that shortly before this fall of wheat some farmers near the northern coast of Morocco had been thrashing wheat with flails, when suddenly a tornado swept over the ground and carried all the wheat and chaff on the thrashing-cloth into the air.

The cloth was swept away by the storm, and the farmers fell to the ground, but were not injured. When the storm had passed, they were horrified at discovering that the result of their labors had totally disappeared. There seemed little doubt that the wheat that fell in Spain was that which belonged to the Moroccan farmers. It had been blown clear across the Mediterranean.

DEPTH TO WHICH DIVERS CAN DESCEND.

The depth to which a diver can descend would appear to be limited by his power for withstanding the adverse influences acting upon him while carrying on his duties under water. Apparently a descent of thirty fathoms—180 feet—of water marks the limit of safety for even the few divers who possess the necessary physical fitness in combination with a disregard for danger beyond the average. Records in deep-sea diving have to be accepted with the proverbial grain of salt. We are told that a diver has reached thirty-three fathoms and a half while engaged in salvage operations recently on the west coast of South America; and, yet again, another diver working on the same wreck is reported to have brought up three bars of copper from a depth of forty fathoms at the expense of his life. An expert who has superintended a large number of diving-operations has found that very few men, whatever their build, are capable of combating the severe strain which is brought to bear upon their physical energies for a few minutes at a depth of twenty or thirty fathoms. Many of his divers dared not venture below ten fathoms. Of 352 divers employed at greater depths thirty were seriously injured, and the result was fatal in ten instances.

WOULD ANIMALS SMOKE?

In the Berlin Zoological Gardens, Professor Paul Meyerhein, a painter of animal life, has been trying the effects of the fragrant weed on various denizens of the gardens, with results which are as novel as they are undoubtedly amusing.

Chief among the subjects of his experiments was the brown bear. He declares that the "common brown bears" are genuine enthusiasts for tobacco.

"When I puff my cigar smoke into their cage," he remarks, "they rush to the front, rubbing their noses and backs against the bars through which the smoke has penetrated."

The professor, with some temerity, once experimented on the lion. The creature was asleep, and this was the moment selected for puffing a volume of tobacco smoke in his face.

Did he at once wake up with a savage growl, lash his tail, and, springing at the bar, shake the massive iron?

Not at all. He awoke and "stood on his legs," which seems a natural enough attitude to adopt, and "sneezed powerfully." Then he quietly lay down on his side and "elevated his nose, as if asking for a second dose."

It may be news to some to hear that goats, stags, and llamas all devour tobacco and cigars with remarkable satisfaction.

THE BULLY RAN.

He was really so strong that nobody cared to contest the point with him, but his brag and his quarrelsomeness made him generally disliked. One day he said: "I'm tired of these babies in camp. I ain't had a good fight in Michigan. I can whip my weight in dogs, wildcats, or anything that breathes, for ten pounds."

A meek-looking man took the bet, and arrangements for the fight were made. It was to take place in a closed room, one week from the time the bet was made.

The day came, and the champion called: "Bring on your animile."

The man who had bet against the king of the camp brought his antagonist in a large sack, which had been deposited behind the stove in the saloon where the match was to be held, the weather just beginning to get cold. The gladiator entered the room, the sack was emptied, and the people crowded at the window to see the contest. Out of the sack came three large hornet-nests, the occupants of which had been revived by the heat.

They issued from the nests in swarms, and lit all over the man. He fought them for a minute or two, then, with a yell, jumped through the window, carrying sash and glass with him, and never stopped until he reached the river, into which he jumped.

"Said he could whip his weight in anything that breathed," remarked the meek little man, as he pocketed the stakes; "but about five pounds of hornets knocked him out in the first round."

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